

Discharge Instructions After a Rectovaginal Fistula Repair

The following information and instructions are for your continued care after discharge. Please read over the information carefully. Any questions you may have while at home can be answered by calling:

Division of Colon and Rectal Surgery

Dr. Morris 734-647-9710 or Physician's Assistant 734-763-9641

Dr. Burney 734-936-6025

Urology/Gynecology

Dr. Fenner/Dr. Delancy 734-763-6295 or Nurse 734-763-6295

Michigan Bowel Control Nurses 734-615-7380 or 1-877-Go Bowel

24 hour on call Resident (GSE Resident or Urology-Gynecology) 734-936-6266

When to call for advice

- If you have a fever greater than 100.4°F for 24 hours.
- A significant increase in pelvic pain or discomfort.
- If you notice drainage that is foul-smelling from the incision site.
- A change in your over-all health status, including nausea, vomiting, chills, profuse sweating, diarrhea, constipation, or increased swelling at the surgery site.
- If you observe bleeding heavier than your normal flow or bleeding that saturates a pad in an hour or less for 2 hours in a row.

Incision Care

- You should bathe the area (gently with water, no soap) between the anus and vagina after bowel movements to cleanse and prevent infection.
- Use sanitary pads instead of tampons during menstrual periods until the area is completely healed.

Activity

- Avoid sexual activity until you are completely healed, or about 6 weeks.
- You may drive when you are no longer taking narcotics and no longer having any pain.
- No heavy lifting greater than 10 pounds for 6 weeks after surgery (a gallon of milk weighs 8 pounds).

Pain

- You may wean yourself off your narcotics by using Motrin or Tylenol.
- Pain medication should not be taken for longer than 1 week.
- To relieve discomfort, take sitz baths for 10 minutes 2-3 times per day.
- To prevent constipation caused by pain medication, take stool softeners while on pain medications. If you have less than one bowel movement every 2 days, please call the Nurse or Physician's Assistant of your service. (numbers are above).

Lifestyle Changes

- Avoid constipation. Drink 1-2 quarts of decaffeinated fluids every day. Eat a fiber-rich diet; 25-35 grams of fiber is normal daily intake.
- Lifting and pushing heavy objects (refrigerators, cars, big boxes) increases stress on the pelvic floor. It is wise to avoid these strenuous activities.
- Exercises that involve impact (running, high-impact aerobics, jumping jacks, jumping rope) also put tremendous force on the pelvic floor. These exercises should be avoided.

You will be scheduled for your postoperative appointment in about 2 weeks for Colon and Rectal Surgery and in about 4-6 weeks for Urology/Gynecology.