

POST-SURGERY DISCHARGE EDUCATION

At Anne Arundel Medical Center, your safety is our top priority. As a member of the healthcare team, you play an important role in helping us ensure your safety. Now that you are on your way home, here are a few tips to help your recovery process. Your surgeon may provide additional post-surgery instructions; please refer to those as well.

General Instructions

A responsible adult should stay with you for 24 hours post-surgery. Do not stay alone, drive, sign important papers or make important business decisions for 24 hours. Children who have had surgery should not ride a bike, skateboard or participate in sports for 24 hours.

Medications After Surgery

You may have some pain after surgery. Taking your pain medication as directed may help you feel better, get up, regain strength, and recover more quickly. Take it only as directed and do not wait until pain becomes severe. If pain is not relieved, do not take additional doses of medication, but instead contact your surgeon. Taking your pain medication before bedtime may help you sleep. When taken as directed, pain medication is not addictive.

Other ways to control pain are ice, elevation, positioning, and relaxation. Follow any instructions your surgeon has given you.

In addition:

- › Do not drink alcohol while taking pain medication. Taking both at once can make you dizzy, slow your breathing or even cause death.
- › Do not drive or use heavy machinery or power tools. Pain medications can make you sleepy and impair judgment.
- › Your surgeon will instruct you as to when you may resume your daily medications.

Pain medication may cause constipation. Avoid laxatives unless they have been prescribed for you. Instead, increase your fluids and fiber. Tell your surgeon if you have stomach pain, nausea, skin rash, itching, or hives.

Important Phone Numbers

Call your surgeon immediately if:

- › You feel your medication is not controlling your pain.
- › You have ongoing side effects such as nausea, prolonged vomiting or skin changes (rash, itching or hives).
- › You have signs of infection, bleeding or fever.
- › You have numbness, increased swelling or pain, or bluish fingers or toes after bone or vein surgery (these may be signs of a post-surgery circulation problem).
- › You are unable to urinate six hours post-surgery or your bladder is uncomfortable.

your surgeon's phone number

If unable to reach your surgeon, call 443-481-1000, and the operator will page the surgeon on call for his/her group.

Contact the anesthesiologist on call at 443-481-1000 for:

- › Headaches following spinal anesthesia
- › Prolonged dizziness
- › Weakness
- › Unexplained sensations or experiences recalled while having general anesthesia during your procedure

Call 443-481-4000 to reach askAAMC, our nurse advice line, for any questions or problems you may have related to your surgery. They will direct you to find appropriate care.

In the event of a real emergency, call 911.

(continued on back)

Caring for Your Incision

You may have a dressing to keep your incision clean and dry. If you are to change your dressing, please make sure you wash your hands before and after the dressing change.

You also may have a tube or drain in place. Most bandages, tubes and drains are easy to care for. Follow your surgeon or nurse's instructions.

If recommended by your surgeon, after bone or vein surgery, keep your affected limb elevated when you sit, rest or sleep. This can help reduce pain and swelling.

A slightly red, swollen incision is normal and some bleeding or discharge is to be expected. However, if redness, bleeding or swelling increases or if your incision smells foul or is warm to the touch, you may have an infection. Fever can signal infection, so take your temperature if you feel warm. Call your surgeon if your temperature stays above 101°F for more than 24 hours or if you have other symptoms of infection.

Follow your healthcare provider's advice about bathing. Do not shower or bathe until your surgeon says

it is okay. If you have a dressing, tube or drain in place, keep it clean and dry.

Eating the Right Foods

Follow your surgeon's dietary instructions. You may experience nausea or vomiting after surgery. To help prevent this or if nausea does develop, drink only clear liquids such as water, tea, sodas, flavored gelatin, or clear soup, and then try to eat toast or saltine crackers. When you are ready, advance to eating soft foods and then to high-protein foods such as fish or chicken. Avoid spicy and fatty foods, which stay in your stomach for long periods. Remember to let your doctor know about any special dietary needs. Resume your diet as tolerated, starting with small portions.

Becoming More Active

You are likely to feel tired after surgery, so get plenty of rest to give your body time to heal. Slowly become more active, and follow your surgeon's advice about deep breathing, coughing, driving, and other activity. Begin activity as soon as possible, with your surgeon's consent, to help maintain good circulation and stimulate your bowels to return to normal.

Walking helps healing, so get up and walk around as much as possible (with surgeon approval). Stand up slowly so you do not get dizzy. Ask your surgeon when it is safe to increase your activity and when you can resume exercising. Make sure you rest in between periods of activity so that you do not get overly tired. Do not drive until your surgeon says it is safe to do so.

To help clear your lungs and prevent pneumonia, you will learn how to deep-breathe and cough after surgery. Be sure to breathe deeply and cough regularly. Support your incision with a pillow when you cough, and avoid smoking to prevent lung problems.

Going back to work depends on your surgery and the type of job you do. Your surgeon will decide when you can return to work. When you return you may still be tired.

Visiting Your Surgeon

Successful surgery includes follow-up care. Your surgeon needs to check your progress to ensure you are recovering safely. Call your surgeon's office to schedule your post-operative visit if you do not already have one.