

## **Inguinal Hernia Repair** **Postoperative Instructions**

Repair of an inguinal hernia, either by laparoscopic or by the open technique, is usually moderately painful for several days, particularly with increasing activity. It should gradually improve over the course of several days, but you can expect aggravation of pain as you increase your activities, especially when you are up for longer periods. This is normal and will not harm your operation. In fact brief, shooting pains with sudden exertion are not uncommon for up to several months. Again, this does not mean that something is wrong. However, pain that worsens after a few days instead of improving is a reason to call.

There are no dietary restrictions unless you are already on a special diet. It really doesn't matter how much solid food you eat during the first few days following surgery, just so that you drink plenty of fluids. Take your usual medications. You can resume Aspirin right away.

Gas and bloating are very common for up to a week following surgery. Urination may be sluggish. If you can't urinate and become uncomfortable, call. Pain medicines are very constipating and may cause nausea. Take your favorite laxative if you become constipated. Dulcolax tablets or suppositories usually work well. The sooner that you can manage with Tylenol or ibuprofen to control your pain, the better.

Fever up to 101 degrees in the first 48 hours after general anesthesia is common, particularly if you smoke. Take Tylenol for fever episodes. Higher temperatures or new or persistent fever after several days should be reported. Report any signs of infection such as redness, pus, drainage, or unusual swelling at wound sites. If you notice immediate redness around any wounds, call me.

Bruising that may extend into the scrotum and/or penis in men and the labia in women is common. In fact, you might become very black and blue, especially if you have been taking aspirin. Don't be alarmed unless it is accompanied by significant swelling, particularly around the incision, the size of a hen's egg, for example. You should call if there is swelling that you are concerned about. After a week or so there is always a firm thickening under the incision that may be tender. This is called a "healing ridge" because healing tissue is always denser than normal tissue. Unless there is redness, increasing pain or fever, don't be concerned. The ridge will resolve in a month or so. If you have undergone a laparoscopic repair, don't be alarmed if you feel a bulge where your hernia used to be. Fluid accumulates in the space where the hernia was and is gradually reabsorbed by your body.

You can shower 24 hours after a laparoscopic procedure and 48 hours after an open operation and pursue light activities such as walking and light lifting. If you wish to shower earlier, keep the dressings dry with cellophane wrap. The dressings can be removed in 48 hours and left off unless you would prefer to keep the wounds covered. You can drive a car when you're comfortable and not taking narcotic pain medications such as Percocet or Lortab.

After I see you in a week or so, you can gradually resume normal activities. There are no absolute weight restrictions. In general, avoid activities that heavily strain the abdominal muscles and abide by the "if it hurts don't do it" rule. Usually a month or so following surgery you should be able to pursue any vigorous activity without restriction. Remember, there may be transient twinges of pain with sudden or new exertions. If you have any specific questions about your work or other activities, please ask me at your first postoperative visit. We will supply you with a work release if necessary.

I am available most weekdays and many weekends for problems that you may be experiencing. If not, one of my partners will be available to respond to your concerns. Try to call during regular office hours, 8:30 AM to 5 PM. If Barbara cannot answer your questions, she will let me know what I will call you back. Please be patient, unless it is urgent it may be at the end of the office day. Remember, the on-call doctor is usually very busy. If you think that your problem can wait until the next office day, it would be appreciated.

Best wishes for a speedy recovery.

Dr. Mac



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