



Patient & Family Guide  
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# At Home After Abdominal Surgery



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# At Home After Abdominal Surgery

This is a guide to help with your care at home.  
*If you had bowel surgery, please ask if there is a more specific pamphlet that you should read.*

## Controlling pain or soreness

- You may take pills for pain or soreness at home for a short period of time. Take the pills as you are told by your healthcare provider.
- Watch out for constipation. See the next section for some tips on avoiding constipation.
- **Do not drink alcohol while you are taking pain pills.**

This pamphlet is just a guide.  
If you have questions, please talk to your healthcare provider. We are here to help you.

## Meals and snacks

- **If you had bowel surgery**, please ask for the Bowel Surgery and/or the Nutrition Guidelines After Bowel Surgery pamphlet(s) for info about what you should eat and what to avoid.
- It may take time for your appetite to get back to normal. Try eating smaller meals and snacks more often.
- Healthy meals will help your body heal.
- The foods that you eat will affect your bowel movements. If constipation is a problem, try to eat foods that are high in fibre. (This does not apply for bowel surgery patients.) Bran cereals, whole wheat bread, green leafy vegetables, and fresh fruit are high in fibre. Drink 8-10 glasses of water a day unless you are not allowed to because of another health problem.
- Ask your surgeon about using stool softeners or laxatives if you need them.
- Remember, you do not need to have a bowel movement every day to be healthy.

## Activity

- You may find that you get tired easily and may need extra rest. This is normal. Bit by bit your energy will come back.
- Some good activities for you are: light housework, preparing small meals, and riding as a passenger in a car for a short distance.
- Walking is the best thing for you after surgery. Start slowly and go further each day.
- Avoid activities like vacuuming, shovelling, mowing, lifting anything over 10 pounds (including children), or playing sports for 6 weeks unless your surgeon tells you otherwise.
- You can resume sexual activity (sex) when you feel well enough.
- Do not drive a car for 2 weeks. Do not drive if you are taking pain pills.

## Care of your incision (cut)

- Your wound will be closed with staples (metal clips) or Steri-Strips™ (special tapes). We will give you an appointment with your surgeon or family doctor to take out the staples 7-10 days after your surgery. Steri-Strips™ can be peeled off as they become loose. This is about 7-10 days after your operation.
- You may shower 2 days after your surgery. Pat your incision lightly to wash and dry. There should not be any drainage or increased redness from the area. See the end of this pamphlet for when to call your surgeon if you notice any change in the incision area. If your bandage must be left on, tape Saran™ Wrap over it to keep it dry.
- You may take a bath when the incision is healed, in about 10 days.

## **Follow-up care**

An appointment will be booked with your surgeon 2-6 weeks after you go home.

## **Going back to work**

Your general health, recovery, and type of work will determine when you can return to work.

Talk about this with your surgeon.

Call your surgeon if you have:

- › A fever
- › Nausea and vomiting
- › Constipation or a greater number of loose bowel movements
- › Increased redness, swelling, or warmth around the incision
- › Increased pain or tenderness around the incision
- › The edges of the incision separate (come apart)
- › Drainage (oozing) from the incision

**If you can't reach your surgeon, go to your local Emergency Department.**

