



Patient & Family Guide
2015

After My Operation

Dartmouth
General Hospital



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After My Operation:

Dartmouth General Hospital

This pamphlet will answer some of your questions about your care at home.

What did I have done?

The name of your operation is:

How will I feel?

Most people feel tired and have some soreness or pain from their operation. Some people may feel sick to their stomach and have stiff or sore muscles.

What can I do?

- Rest quietly today.
- Tomorrow, be up and about unless told otherwise by your surgeon.
- Do not drive a car or operate machinery for 24 hours. You need to have an adult drive you or escort you home when leaving the hospital after your surgery.
- Do not sign any legal documents or important papers for 24 hours.
- **Do not drink alcohol.**
- You should not be responsible for small children or be a main caregiver.
- You should have a responsible adult stay with you overnight and for the first 24 hours after your operation, due to the anesthetic.

When can I eat?

Follow the instructions given to you by your nurse or surgeon.

- When you are able, it is best to start with clear juices, pop, tea, clear soups, crackers, or toast. Starting tomorrow, you may eat normally. **Do not drink alcohol for 24 hours.**

What will I do if I have pain?

If you did not get a prescription filled before your operation, have it filled at a drugstore on your way home. If you are having pain, start taking your pain pills as soon as you can. Be sure to read the label on the bottle and take the pills according to the directions. **Never drink alcohol while you are taking pain pills.**

If you had an operation on an arm, hand, leg, or foot, put it up on pillows above the level of your heart. This should help with the pain, aching, or throbbing.

How do I take care of my dressings?

Follow the surgeon's instruction sheet if you received one. If you did not get an instruction sheet:

- Keep the dressings dry.
- If dressings get wet, you may reinforce them by adding another dressing.
- You can buy sterile dressings from any drugstore.
- Do not remove your dressings for _____ days.
- If you have Steri-Strips™, they should stay on for 7-10 days.

When can I drive?

Do not drive a car for 24 hours. Be sure you are pain-free and can handle the limb or area comfortably. Follow the instructions given to you by your surgeon.

Please note: prescription pain medications can make you sleepy and you should not drive while taking them.

When can I return to work?

Talk about returning to work with your surgeon.

What if I have diagnosed sleep apnea?

For ALL sleep apnea patients:

- Sleep in a semi-upright position or on your side for the first 24 hours after your operation. Don't sleep lying flat on your back.
- Use only medications prescribed by your doctor.
- Do not drink alcohol.
- Use your dental device to sleep if you used it before the surgery.
- If your pain gets worse and you are using more prescribed pain medication, contact your doctor or go to the Emergency Department.

For patients who use CPAP machines:

- Use your CPAP machine whenever you are sleeping.
- Use your CPAP machine when you are resting or napping during the day while taking pain medication.

When do I call the doctor?

If you have bleeding:

- › Place your hand over the dressing and press firmly.
- › Place the affected part up on pillows above the level of your heart, if possible.
- › Rest quietly until the bleeding stops.

Contact your doctor if the bleeding continues.

In case of severe bleeding, go to the Emergency Department immediately.

Call your doctor as soon as possible if you have any of these signs of infection:

- › Fever or chills
- › Increased swelling, redness, or warmth around the wound
- › Increased drainage from the wound
- › Bad smell from the wound
- › Pain that is not helped by the pain pills you are taking

You may contact your surgeon's office or clinic:

Surgeon: _____

Phone: _____

If your surgeon is not available:

Call your family doctor

OR

Go to your local Emergency Department

Follow-up care

Return appointment: Yes No

Call your surgeon/family doctor for instructions. Within 2-3 days, you should be notified by the clinic of your appointment time, if needed.

Your next medication is due at:

_____ a.m. p.m.

