

After Your General Surgery: What You Need to Know

Dartmouth General Hospital

Your surgery was: _____ (type)

Your followup appointment is: _____ (date)

at _____ a.m./p.m.

at _____ (location)

Your family doctor's phone number is _____

Your surgeon's phone number is _____

- You should have a followup visit with your surgeon in 6-8 weeks. If you are not given a followup appointment when you leave the hospital, please call your surgeon's office to make one. Some minor surgeries may not need followup.
- Keep your incision (cut) clean and dry. Staples or sutures will be taken out 10-14 days after your surgery by your family doctor. If you have Steri-Strips™, you can remove them in 7-10 days. Absorbable sutures and skin glue do not need to be removed. They will fade away on their own.
- It is normal to see a small amount of blood on the bandage, but if there is bleeding that is soaking through the bandage or does not stop, go to the nearest Emergency Department (ED).
- Showers are safe after 24-48 hours. Avoid pools, hot tubs, and baths for at least the first week. They often have contaminated water.
- If you had anal/peri-anal surgery, you may have dressings that need to be removed the day after your surgery. Follow your surgeon's instructions for wound care. A visit from VON (home care) may be arranged to help you with this at home.
- It is important that you understand what activities you can and can't do. There will be some limits to your physical activity after surgery to help your incision heal. These limits usually involve no heavy lifting (over 15 pounds) or difficult exercise for 4-6 weeks, or 2-4 weeks if you had laparoscopic surgery. If you didn't get instructions from your surgeon about activities, please contact your surgeon's office.

- You may drive if your surgeon says it is OK. If you have pain and can't push the pedals, or are taking medication that makes you drowsy or dizzy, don't drive. It usually takes about 2 weeks after surgery to return to driving.
- Limits on activities after surgery also apply to sexual interactions (sex). If you have pain during sexual activity, stop and try again later.
- Make sure you are taking the medicine that your surgeon has recommended to manage your pain. This may include acetaminophen (Tylenol®), anti-inflammatory drugs, or narcotics.
- You may have problems after you go home. If you feel that you are having a problem, contact your family doctor. If that is not possible, go to the nearest ED. Watch out for these signs:
 - › If you are having trouble or can't pass urine (pee) for more than 6 hours, contact your family doctor or surgeon or go to the nearest ED as soon as possible.
 - › Infection in the abdomen (stomach area) can happen after surgery. If you are having more pain even though you are taking pain medicine regularly, this can be a sign of infection. Other signs include: fever, chills, and diarrhea. Redness and swelling at the incision site can also mean infection. If you notice any of these signs, visit your family doctor, contact your surgeon's office, or go to the nearest ED.
 - › If you had your gallbladder removed, it is common to have some abdominal pain. If you have pain similar to before your operation and you also have fever, chills, or jaundice (yellow skin or yellow eyes), contact your surgeon's office or go to the nearest ED.
 - › After bowel surgery, it is common to have changes in bowel habits, especially some diarrhea. These changes should get better with time. If they are not better by your followup appointment, talk to your surgeon. A small amount of blood in your stool (poop) right after surgery is normal, but if you have ongoing bleeding or a large amount of blood and/or clots, go to the nearest ED.
 - › After hernia surgery, it is normal to have some fluid at the site of your surgery for the first few months. This may feel like the hernia has returned. Contact your surgeon's office if you feel that the lump is getting bigger or more painful.
 - › If you vomit (throw up) more than 1-2 times, contact your family doctor, or surgeon or go to the nearest ED.

If you are worried that you have a problem from your surgery, contact your surgeon's office. If you can't reach anyone at your surgeon's office and you are worried that the problem is serious, go to the nearest Emergency Department.