



James A. Rieger, MD
316-652-9333

Post Operative Information for Abdominoplasty

You have just had a delicate operation on your abdomen. The following information is intended for your wellbeing and will assist you during your recovery period. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to call me at 316-652-9333 (there is an answering service 24 hours/day). For after hours, post-surgical concerns, if you have left a message and have not received a call back within 30 minutes, you may call Kansas Medical Center at 316-300-4000 and have them contact me. If you are experiencing a medical emergency and need immediate medical attention please go to the nearest emergency room or if necessary dial 911.

Following surgery, you will go to the post-anesthesia care unit. Two clear plastic drains will be present. These drains will remain in place until the drainage subsides, usually two weeks or more after surgery.

- It is important to empty the drains and record the amount. Pick a time you can do this consistently as we will ask for your totals in a 24 hour period, for example 9 am and 9 pm. This makes it easier for you to document accurately. The nurse at the surgical center will review the care of the drains prior to going home.
- A steristrip (paper tape) dressing will also be in place. Following your operation, your tissues will react with swelling and a feeling of tightness which will be responsible for discomfort. Your discomfort will resolve gradually over the next few days to weeks and you may gradually increase your activity.
- You can expect to feel sleepy for a day or two after surgery as well. In addition, there may be some numbness of the skin. Most of these areas regain their sensation, but it does require time (approximately six months).

Some reasons to call:

- Fever
- Pain not relieved by medication
- Severe pain
- Severe or asymmetric swelling
- Redness, warmth, drainage or odor from the operative site
- Bleeding
- Persistent nausea, vomiting, inability to urinate or constipation
- If you have ANY questions or concerns regarding your condition or surgery

A Note About Questions

Your healing journey is unique, and no two recoveries are exactly alike. If something worries you, please reach out to our office directly. We know your medical history and surgery details, and can give you advice that's safe and specific to you. Online forums and social media may offer general information, but they can also be confusing or misleading. We're here for you—day or night—so please call us anytime you have questions or concerns. **316-652-9333**

Avoid the risk of extreme swelling & post operative problems by avoiding the six "S's"

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|--------------------|-------------------------|
| 1) Straining | 4) Sunshine |
| 2) Stooping | 5) Smoking |
| 3) Sexual activity | 6) Strenuous activities |



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Follow-up: When each drain has an output of 15 cc or less in a 24 hour period for 2-3 days please call our office (316-652-9333) to schedule an appointment. If you have questions or concerns please call!

"DO"

- Have your prescriptions filled right away.
- Completely finish your antibiotics and use pain medication as needed, following directions.
- Gradually progress to a normal diet beginning with liquids and light foods (i.e. Jello, crackers, soups).
- Resume taking any prior daily prescriptions, UNLESS they are on the list of medications to avoid.
- You may shower one day after surgery.
- Start walking slowly around your home as soon as you can. Gradually go a little farther each time. Walking helps prevent blood clots in your legs.
- Most patients can return to work in about a week, depending on their job. Be sure to talk with Dr. Rieger about what's right for you.
- Start your antibiotics the afternoon you get home from surgery—take one dose in the afternoon and one before bed. Beginning the next day, take them four times a day: at breakfast, lunch, dinner, and before bed.
- Return to normal levels of activity in about six weeks.

"DO NOT"

- Do not lift anything anything heavier than 5–10 pounds for the first 1–2 weeks. This includes children, groceries, laundry baskets, pets, etc. After that, gradually increase activity only as advised by Dr. Rieger.
- Do not take responsibility for children or needy adults.
- Do not bathe in a tub or swim in a pool for 4-5 weeks after your incision and drain sites have closed.
- Do not use hot tubs or swim in lakes or oceans for eight weeks.
- Do not remove the steristrips for approximately 12-14 days. Then pull them off one at a time (unless they fall off by themselves).
- Do not make any important decisions or sign any important papers in the 24 hours following surgery or anytime while taking pain medication.
- Do not drive, operate machinery or tools until it is specifically allowed, usually seven days OR until you are no longer taking narcotics.
- Do not use hot or ice packs.
- Do not participate in sports or workout for six weeks.
- Do not scratch or touch the incision sights. You may use Benadryl by mouth for itching.
- Do not Smoke.
- Do not drink alcohol after surgery for two weeks. Never mix narcotics with alcohol.
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Remember

- Swelling and bruising are normal and may shift toward your feet due to gravity. Most of it fades within a few weeks, but full healing can take six months to a year. Everyone heals differently, so take it slow and give your body time to recover.
- You may use Tylenol if you wish. However, most pain medications contain Tylenol. Thus, do not take these medications and Tylenol together as you may be taking too much Tylenol which can cause liver damage and other problems. Do not take aspirin, aspirin-containing medications (please refer to the Medication Avoidance list you were given) two weeks prior and two weeks after - they may cause bleeding problems. If you are unsure about a particular medication, please call your pharmacist.
- In addition, ultraviolet exposure from the sun is very damaging to the skin. Avoid direct sun to the abdomen for about one month. It is advisable to use sunscreen on a regular basis. This is certainly advisable for at least the first year following surgery. You may use moisturizer and creams as desired after three weeks (avoid the incision if it is not completely closed).

What to expect following surgery:

- Drainage – Small amounts of blood-tinged fluid may collect in drains if placed. Mild oozing at the incision is also normal in the first days.
- Swelling & Bruising – The abdomen will feel tight, swollen, and bruised for the first couple of weeks. Swelling gradually subsides over several weeks.
- Discomfort – Pulling, soreness, and difficulty standing fully upright are expected. This improves as the tissue stretches and heals.