

Umbilical Hernia Repair

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

An umbilical hernia repair is surgery to fix your umbilical (belly button) hernia. Your hernia may be fixed with an open or laparoscopic surgery. You may have pain, bloating, or nausea after your surgery. If you had a laparoscopic repair, you may have pain in your shoulder or near your ribs. This is from the gas used during surgery.

DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS:

Call 911 for any of the following:

- You feel lightheaded, short of breath, and have chest pain.
- You cough up blood.

Seek care immediately if:

- Your arm or leg feels warm, tender, and painful. It may look swollen and red.
- Blood soaks through your bandage.
- Your abdomen feels hard and looks bigger than usual.
- Your bowel movements are black, bloody, or look like tar.
- You have severe abdominal pain.

Contact your healthcare provider if:

- You have a fever.
- Your pain does not get better after you take pain medicine.
- You develop a skin rash, hives, or itching.
- Your incision is swollen, red, or draining pus or fluid.
- You have nausea or are vomiting.
- You do not have a bowel movement for 3 days or more.

- You have questions or concerns about your condition or care.

Medicines:

- **Prescription pain medicine** may be given. Ask your healthcare provider how to take this medicine safely. Some prescription pain medicines contain acetaminophen. Do not take other medicines that contain acetaminophen without talking to your healthcare provider. Too much acetaminophen may cause liver damage. Prescription pain medicine may cause constipation. Ask your healthcare provider how to prevent or treat constipation.
- **Take your medicine as directed.** Contact your healthcare provider if you think your medicine is not helping or if you have side effects. Tell him or her if you are allergic to any medicine. Keep a list of the medicines, vitamins, and herbs you take. Include the amounts, and when and why you take them. Bring the list or the pill bottles to follow-up visits. Carry your medicine list with you in case of an emergency.

Bathing: You can shower 48 hours after your surgery or as directed. Do not take a bath or go in hot tubs. This can cause an infection. Wash around your incision. Let soap and water run over your incision. Gently pat the area dry or let it air dry.

Care for your incision as directed: Keep your incision clean and dry. Change your bandages when they get wet or dirty. If you have Steri-strips™ over your incision, allow them to fall off on their own. If they do not fall off after 2 weeks, gently peel them off. Do not put powders or lotions on your incision. Check your incision every day for signs of infection, such as redness, swelling, or pus.

Self-care:

- **Eat high-fiber foods.** Fiber may prevent constipation and straining during a bowel movement. This can prevent your hernia from returning. Foods that contain fiber include fruits, vegetables, legumes, and whole grains. You may need to take over-the-counter fiber supplements if you do not get enough fiber in your diet. Ask your healthcare provider if supplements are right for you.
- **Drink plenty of liquids.** Liquids may prevent constipation and straining during a bowel movement. This will help prevent pressure on your incision. It may also prevent another hernia. Ask how much liquid you should drink each day and which liquids are best for you.
- **Apply ice** on your incision for 15 to 20 minutes every hour or as directed. Use an ice pack, or put crushed ice in a plastic bag. Cover it with a towel before you apply it to your skin. Ice helps prevent tissue damage and decreases swelling and pain.

Activity: Take short walks around the house every hour. This will help prevent blood clots. Slowly return to your normal activities. Do not play sports or lift anything heavier than 10 pounds for 4 to 6 weeks or as directed. Ask your healthcare provider when you can return to work and your usual activities.

Follow up with your healthcare provider as directed: Write down your questions so you remember to ask them during your visits.

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