

## **After An Inguinal Hernia Repair**

### **AMBULATORY CARE:**

#### **Call 911 for any of the following:**

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

#### **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 or groin feels hard and looks bigger than usual.
- Your bruise suddenly gets bigger.
- Your bowel movements are black, bloody, or tarry-looking.

#### **Contact your healthcare provider if:**

- You have a fever above 101°F.
- You develop a skin rash, hives, or itching.
- Your incision is swollen, red, or draining pus or fluid.
- You have nausea, or you are vomiting.
- You cannot have a bowel movement.
- You have trouble urinating.
- Your pain does not get better after you take pain medicine.

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

**Medicines:** You **may** need any of the following:

- **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.
- **NSAIDs** , such as ibuprofen, help decrease swelling, pain, and fever. This medicine is available with or without a doctor's order. NSAIDs can cause stomach bleeding or kidney problems in certain people. If you take blood thinner medicine, **always** ask your healthcare provider if NSAIDs are safe for you. Always read the medicine label and follow directions.
- **Acetaminophen** decreases pain and fever. It is available without a doctor's order. Ask how much to take and how often to take it. Follow directions. Read the labels of all other medicines you are using to see if they also contain acetaminophen, or ask your doctor or pharmacist. Acetaminophen can cause liver damage if not taken correctly. Do not use more than 4 grams (4,000 milligrams) total of acetaminophen in one day.
- **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 in 48 hours. Remove your bandage before you shower. It is normal to see a small amount of blood under the bandage. Carefully wash around your wound. It is okay to let soap and water run over your wound. **Do not** scrub your wound. Gently pat your wound dry.

**Care for your wound as directed:** If you have strips of medical tape over your incision, allow them to fall off on their own. It may take 7 to 10 days for them to fall off. Do not put powders, lotions, or creams on your wound. They may cause your wound to get infected. Do not get in a bathtub, swimming pool, or hot tub until your healthcare provider says it is okay. Check your wound every day for signs of infection, such as redness, swelling, or pus. Bruising is normal and expected. Men may have bruising and swelling in the scrotum.

**Take deep breaths and cough:** Do this 10 times each hour. This will decrease your risk for a lung infection. Take a deep breath and hold it for as long as you can. Let the air out and then cough strongly. Deep breaths help open your airway. You may be given an incentive spirometer to help you take deep breaths. Put the plastic piece in your mouth and take a slow, deep breath. Then let the air out and cough. Repeat these steps 10 times every hour.

**Use a pillow as a splint:** Press a pillow lightly against your incision when you cough, move, or get out of bed. This may decrease pain or discomfort. You may need another person to help you get in and out of bed, a chair, or off the toilet.

**Activity:** Get out of bed and walk the day after your surgery. This will help prevent blood clots, move your bowels after surgery, and increase healing. Start with short walks around the house. Gradually walk further each day. Do not play sports for 2 to 3 weeks. Do not lift anything heavier than 5 pounds until your healthcare provider says it is okay. This may put too much pressure on your incision and cause it to come apart. It may also increase your risk for another hernia.

**Drink liquids as directed:** Liquids may prevent constipation and straining during a bowel movement. This will help prevent pressure on your incision, and prevent another hernia. Ask how much liquid to drink each day and which liquids are best for you.

**Decrease swelling:**

- **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. Ice helps prevent tissue damage and decreases swelling and pain.
- **Elevate your scrotum** on a towel. Lie in bed. Roll a small towel and place it under your scrotum. This will help decrease swelling and bruising.

**Driving:** Do not drive for at least 1 week after surgery. Do not drive if you are taking prescription pain medication. Do not drive until it is comfortable to wear a seatbelt across your abdomen. Ask your healthcare provider when it is safe for you to drive.

**Return to work or school:** You may be able to return to work or school in 48 to 72 hours. You may need to stay out of work if longer you have to lift heavy items at work.

**Do not smoke:** Nicotine and other chemicals in cigarettes and cigars can prevent your wound from healing. It can also increase your risk for another inguinal hernia. Ask your healthcare provider for information if you currently smoke and need help to quit. E-cigarettes or smokeless tobacco still contain nicotine. Talk to your healthcare provider before you use these products.

**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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