

## **Ventral Hernia Repair**

### **WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:**

A ventral hernia repair is surgery to fix a ventral hernia. A ventral hernia may be repaired if the hernia is preventing blood flow to organs or blocking the intestines. It may be done laparoscopically or open. Laparoscopically means that your healthcare provider will use several small incisions to fix the hernia. In an open repair, your healthcare provider will make one incision to fix your hernia.

### **DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS:**

#### **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 feels hard and looks bigger than usual.
- 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.
- Your pain does not get better after taking 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.
- **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.
- **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.

**Care for your wound as directed:** Carefully wash around your wound. It is okay to let soap and water run over your wound. **Do not** scrub your wound. Dry the area and put on new, clean bandages as directed. Change your bandages when they get wet or dirty. If you have strips of medical tape over your incision, allow them to fall off on their own. Do not get in a bathtub, swimming pool, or hot tub until your healthcare provider says it is okay.

**Self-care:**

- **Eat a variety of healthy foods.** Healthy foods include fruits, vegetables, whole-grain breads, low-fat dairy products, beans, lean meats, and fish. Healthy foods may help you heal faster. Ask if you need to be on a special diet.
- **Drink liquids as directed.** Liquids may prevent constipation and straining during a bowel movement. This will help prevent pressure on your incision, and another hernia from happening. Ask how much liquid to 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. Ice helps prevent tissue damage and decreases swelling and pain.
- **Take deep breaths and cough** 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. Press a pillow lightly against your incision when you cough. This may decrease pain or discomfort.
- **Wear a binder as directed.** Your healthcare provider may tell you to wear a binder over your incision. A binder is an elastic bandage that wraps around your abdomen and over your incision. It fits snug and helps decrease pain when you move or cough.

**Driving:** Do not drive for at least one week after surgery. Do not drive if you are taking prescription pain medication. Ask your healthcare provider when it is safe for you to drive.

**Activity:** Do not lift anything heavy 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. Do not play sports for 2 to 3 weeks. Ask your healthcare provider when you can return to work and your normal 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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