

# Discharge information

# Laparotomy



Western Health

## Introduction

- After open gynaecological surgery you will usually stay in hospital for 1-3 nights. However, everyone is different, and our bodies will recover in different ways.
- It is important to try not to be in too much of a hurry and instead slowly increase the amount that you do. Try to strike a balance, listen to your body and only do as much as feels comfortable.
- In the first couple of days after your operation you may feel a little flat or emotional. This varies from woman to woman and is entirely normal. It may be caused by hormonal changes, the anaesthetic, or your feelings about the surgery in general.

## Pain

- You may still need to take pain relief after discharge from hospital.
- If you take regular pain relief (i.e paracetamol and/or ibuprofen) then it will allow you to move around more easily and sleep better.
- You may be prescribed stronger pain relief. You should use this when the regular pain relief isn't enough.
- Do not drink alcohol, drive, or perform other activities that require concentration while taking stronger pain relief.

## Constipation

- You may experience constipation after surgery, especially if you are taking strong pain relief.
- It is important to try and avoid becoming constipated, as you should not be straining after surgery.
- When you are taking stronger pain relief it is recommended that you take either; Coloxyl and Senna, Movicol, lactulose, or Nulax to prevent constipation – you can purchase these from your local pharmacy.
- Pear or prune juice can also reduce the constipation effects of strong pain relief.

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## Diet

- Resume your normal diet.
- Drink plenty of fluids, including 6-8 glasses of water per day.

## Vaginal bleeding

- You may have some vaginal bleeding for a few days after surgery. It should become less every day and eventually browner in colour.
- You should wear a sanitary pad as required.
- If your vaginal loss is heavier than a period, bright red, or offensive smelling, please present for review.
- Avoid douching, swimming, or inserting anything into the vagina until the bleeding or discharge has stopped.

## Wound care

- Your abdominal wounds will be covered by a dressing that is waterproof and you can shower with these as usual.
- The dressings may start to peel off after the first 5-7 days and this is fine. They are not required after the first few days and it is recommended you then leave your wounds uncovered.
- Ensure that you pat your wounds dry with a clean towel - do not rub or scrub.
- Your sutures will usually be underneath the skin and are all dissolvable. They do not need to be removed.
- Your wounds will go through several stages of healing. At the beginning they may feel numb, itchy or tingling. You may also feel the wound is lumpy as the new tissue forms, this is normal.
- The way your scars look will change over time and may not reach their final appearance for up to a year.

## Sexual intercourse

- You can resume sexual activity once any vaginal bleeding or discharge has stopped.

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## Activity

- During the first week or two you may need to have rest periods throughout the day before gradually resuming your usual activities.
- You must not do any heavy lifting for 6 weeks. This includes shopping bags, washing baskets, moving furniture, vacuuming, mopping floors, pushing shopping trolleys etc.
- If you need to lift, squat at the knees rather than bending over.
- Wait until your follow up appointment before resuming strenuous activity (i.e. aerobics, gym, running, contact sports, swimming)
- You should not drive
  - If you are in pain
  - If you are taking strong painkillers
  - If you do not feel confident that you could perform an emergency stop if needed.
- Some insurance companies place restrictions on driving after surgery/procedures, so check your policy details.

## When to seek advice

- Visit your local doctor if you have any:
  - Nausea or vomiting
  - Develop an offensive discharge
  - Wounds are red, inflamed or hot to touch
  - Pain that is not controlled by regular pain relief
  - Painful urination
- Present to the Emergency Department if:
  - Fever >38 degrees
  - Excessive nausea and vomiting
  - Excessive pain
  - Excessive bleeding from the wound site or vagina

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## Follow up

A follow up appointment in the gynaecology outpatient's department has been requested. If you have not received this within 10-14 days please call (03) 83451727.

Please note that this information is not meant to replace any specific instructions that you receive from your Doctor. Please follow your Doctor's advice at all times.

**FOR AN EMERGENCY: CALL AN AMBULANCE ON 000**  
Alternate contact: Nurse on call - 1300 606 024



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