

Post-Op Instructions Following Cholecystectomy

***If you have increasing redness around the incision sites, thick drainage, or fever above 101°F call the office as soon as possible (314-434-1211) to speak with our clinical staff.**

WHAT TO EXPECT

- **Pain** - Everyone's pain tolerance is different. You may be very sore for 3 days following your surgery. Each day will get better, thereafter (*i.e. you will begin to notice improvement on day 4-5*). However, you may not feel 100% improved for 6-8 weeks after surgery, depending on your surgery.
 - You may experience shoulder pain or gas bubbles a few days after surgery. This is from the gas used during the operation and is common with any laparoscopic procedure.
 - If you experience continued gallbladder "attacks" after your surgery, notify our office.
 - *Additional testing may be required*
- **Bowel Movements** – You may experience loose stools a few days after the surgery. If you do, this should improve and should not continue for more than 1-2 weeks. Call our office if it persists.
 - On the flip side, it is not unusual to go a day or two without having a bowel movement after your surgery. However, it is not acceptable to go more than a few days without a bowel movement.
 - Refer to our "Preventing Post-Op Constipation" sheet for instructions to follow immediately after your surgery. *Available on our website.*
- **Drainage** - Your incision(s) *may* drain a small amount.
 - Clear to light pink/red drainage is normal a few days after surgery. If the area is constantly wet notify our office.
 - *Apply a loose dressing or band aid to stop any drainage from soiling clothing. Change often.*
- **Fatigue** - You may feel tired after surgery for several weeks. You should plan on about 85% improvement by post-op day #7, however, you might not feel 100% for 6 weeks after surgery. Continue to be active, but allow time to rest.
- **Swelling** - You may turn black and blue (bruise) around your incision(s) and surrounding tissue. Gravity will push the bruising down as it resolves. Swelling may in your abdomen may cause pants to fit tightly – this is normal.

INSTRUCTIONS

- **Ice / Heat** - You may apply ice to the incision(s) for 1st day after your surgery in 15-20 minute increments. *Be sure to place a towel between your skin and the ice pack to avoid direct contact. Not very effective after 24 hours.*
 - A heating pad may also bring some comfort when used starting 2 days after your surgery in 15-20 minute increments. **Do not use high heat.**
- **Skin Glue (Dermabond)** – if this was placed in the operating room you will not have any dressings to your incision(s). If this is present (*and your do NOT have a drain*), you may begin showering immediately after your surgery.
 - Some people can develop allergies to the skin glue. If you notice increasing surrounding redness or itching to your incision please notify our office.
- **Showering** – If you do not have a drain in place & do not have skin glue, remove your outer dressing(s) and shower **2 full days** after your surgery. You may re-cover with gauze if you prefer, but this is only necessary if you are having drainage.

- Do **NOT** soak healing incision site(s) – *i.e. a bath, hot tub, swimming pool*
- If you have small strips of tape directly on your skin (steri-strips), under your dressing, leave those on and do not remove them until 7-14 days after surgery.
- The sutures used in your incision are most likely self-dissolving and should not need to be removed.
- **Drain(s)** - If a drain was placed, you will need to make an appointment with our office to have it removed when it is draining less than 30 ml of fluid in a full 24 hour period (*usually on the 3rd-5th post-op day*).
 - Go to our website, www.StLouisSurgical.com, to watch a video on how to properly care for your drain.
 - Empty the drain at least twice a day and record your output. After emptying, be sure to squeeze the bulb tightly to collapse it before placing the cap to ensure there is suction.
 - You do not need to save the fluid for your surgeon.
 - You should not shower until this is removed.
 - You may shower the day after your drain has been removed.

MEDICATIONS

- You may be sent home with prescription pain medicine. Try to first control pain with your usual over the counter medications, like Tylenol or Ibuprofen (*Advil*), following the package instructions. Use the narcotic pain prescription only if the Tylenol or Ibuprofen is not effective.
 - You **cannot** drive while on prescription pain medicine.
 - All narcotics can cause severe constipation, as well as possible nausea and vomiting.
 - Refer to “Preventing Post-Op Constipation” education sheet for instructions (*found on our website*). We recommend starting these measures as soon as you arrive home from your surgery.

RESTRICTIONS

- You should not do any strenuous exercise for 6-8 weeks after surgery unless directed otherwise. No lifting over 10-15 lbs. (*Ex: a gallon of milk weighs 8 lbs*) to avoid causing a hernia.
- You may walk as much as you want, and we recommend that you move as much as possible.
 - Fatigue after surgery is normal and can take up to a few weeks to completely resolve.
- **Diet** - there are no dietary restrictions following this surgery, but it may be helpful to eat a low-fat diet if you experience loose stools immediately after surgery.

FOLLOW UP

- Call the office for a **“drain removal”** visit with the Nurse Practitioner once you reach less than 30ml of output in a full 24 hour period - *if applicable*.
- Call the office for a **“post-op”** visit 1-2 weeks after your surgery with your surgeon.
- **If you have increasing redness around the incisions, drainage, or fever above 101°F call the office.**

The office is open for phone calls from 8am - 5 pm Monday-Thursday, Friday 8am -4 pm. For an after-hours emergency, call the Medical Exchange @ 314-364-5262 to speak to the surgeon on call.

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Be sure to check out www.StLouisSurgical.com for information, instructions, videos, and MORE