

## After Your Coccygectomy

### *Self-care to help you recover*

*This handout explains self-care after having a coccygectomy, which is surgery to remove the tailbone (coccyx).*

### Self-Care

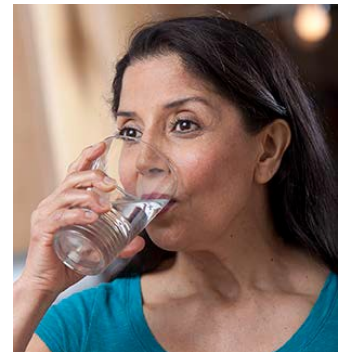
Until your sutures are removed and your wound is not tender:

- **Avoid sitting on hard surfaces or sitting for long periods.** Sit on a ring or donut-shaped cushion. Try to stand and walk around often to lessen pressure on the surgical site.
- **Lie on your side when you sleep.** Sleeping on your side will lessen pressure on the surgical area. When sleeping on your side, place a pillow between your knees. This will help keep your spine in the best position.
- **Wear clothes that fit loosely.** Avoid wearing tight jeans or pants that put pressure on the surgical area.

### Eat Healthy Foods and Stay Hydrated

To help your body heal:

- **Eat a healthy, balanced diet.** Include a variety of vegetables, fruit, lean meats, and whole grains.
- **Drink lots of water.** Your urine should be light yellow or clear.



*Drinking lots of water will help your body heal.*

### Pain Control

- You may take acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), or naproxen (Aleve, Naprosyn) to control pain after surgery. You can buy these medicines at your local drugstore. You do not need a prescription.
- If you have a lot of pain when having a bowel movement, try taking a fiber supplement such as Benefiber or Metamucil.

## Opioid Pain Medicine

Your doctor may prescribe *opioid* pills for severe pain. If needed, you will use this strong medicine for only a day or two.

- Opioids can cause constipation. Take a stool softener or laxative while taking opioids.
- Opioids can affect your judgment. While you are taking opioids:
  - Do **not** drive.
  - Do **not** drink alcohol.
  - Do **not** use machines (such as a lawn mower).
  - Do **not** sign legal papers or make big decisions.
  - Do **not** be responsible for children, pets, or an adult who needs care.

## Wound Care and Hygiene

- You may see some drainage from your incision. This should slowly lessen and then stop.
- Keep your incision clean and dry. Do **not** apply creams, lotions, ointments, or powders to your incision.
- Change the gauze dressing at least once a day.
- After your incision stops draining, you no longer need to apply a dressing. But, you can keep using a dressing for comfort.
- It is OK to shower. Do **not** scrub the incision area. Use a clean towel to gently pat your incision dry.
- Do **not** take a bath, sit in a hot tub, or immerse your incision in water until your sutures are removed and your wound is fully healed.
- Do **not** smoke or use nicotine products. Nicotine can slow or prevent wound healing.

## When to Call

**Call the clinic at 206.744.9300 and press 2 if you have:**

- Fever higher than 100°F (37.8°C)
- More redness, heat, drainage, or swelling at your incision
- New or worse pain
- Changes in your bowel or bladder control

### Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or other healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

Weekdays 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., call Harborview Spine Clinic: 206.744.9350 and press 2 when you hear the recording.

After hours and on weekends and holidays, call 206.744.9350 and you will be given options to be connected with a nurse.