

After Your Myotomy

Self-care guidelines

Follow the self-care guidelines in this handout to avoid problems after surgery. If you have any questions, please call your primary care provider.

For the First 24 Hours

If you received anesthesia or sedation, **for the next 24 hours, do NOT:**

- Drive
- Drink alcohol
- Be home alone
- Be responsible for the care of another person
- Use machinery
- Sign any legal papers or other important forms

Precautions to Speed Your Recovery

Driving

- Do **not** drive for at least 2 weeks after surgery.
- Do **not** drive as long you are taking prescription pain medicine (*opioids*).

Activity

- For 6 weeks, do not lift anything that weighs more than 10 pounds (a gallon of water weighs about 8 pounds).
- As you heal, slowly increase your activity. But, avoid strenuous activities for 6 weeks after surgery, especially those that use your abdominal muscles.
- It is important to walk. Start walking as soon as possible after surgery, and walk 3 to 4 times a day. Increase how far you walk as you recover.
- You may resume sexual activity 2 weeks after your surgery, as long as you follow all activity precautions.

Pain Control

- You will have some pain in your incision. You will receive a prescription for pain medicine to help control this pain. Remember that all of your medicine, including pain medicine, must be in crushed or liquid form.
- You may also have some shoulder pain. This is caused by the gas that was used to inflate your abdomen during surgery. This pain usually lasts 4 to 5 days. Prescription pain medicines do not have much effect on this shoulder pain. Massage and heating pads may be helpful if this pain bothers you.



It is important to start walking as soon as possible after surgery.



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handout.

Dressing and Skin Care

- You may remove your dressings (gauze and Tegaderm) 48 hours after your surgery.
- You will have white strips of tape called Steri-Strips under your dressings. If they have not fallen off on their own in 2 weeks, you may remove them.

Showering

- You may shower the day after your surgery. The Tegaderm is plastic and will repel water.
- Once your dressings are off, it is OK to shower and get Steri-Strips wet. Gently pat the Steri-Strips dry after showering. Do not rub them dry.
- Do not take a bath, go swimming, sit in a hot tub, or soak your incisions for 4 weeks after your surgery.



Breathing Exercises

Keep using your *incentive spirometer* (a device to help exercise your lungs) at home. This will help to prevent pneumonia and other problems.

Your nurse will show you how to use the incentive spirometer to exercise your lungs.

Diet and Nutrition

- Follow your dietitian's instructions on what foods you can eat at home after your surgery. Read the handout your dietitian gave you. Call the dietitian if you have questions.
- You will start with a liquid diet and progress to a soft diet usually by the time you leave the hospital. You will be on this diet for 4 to 6 weeks after your surgery. This will help keep food from getting stuck in the area where your surgery was done.
- You can start to eat your usual foods about 4 to 6 weeks after surgery. Be sure to take small bites and chew them well. Try eating 6 to 8 small meals a day instead of 3 large meals.
- It is normal to lose about 10 pounds after this surgery.

Medicines

- **For 4 weeks after surgery, all of your medicine must be crushed or in a liquid form. Do not swallow whole pills during this time.** You will be given a pill crusher before you go home. Call your pharmacy if you have questions about crushing any of your medicines.
- Take all of the medicines you received at discharge as prescribed. One of these medicines will help prevent nausea and vomiting. It is important **not** to vomit in the first few weeks after your surgery. Follow all the written instructions that came with your medicines.
- Ask your nurse or doctor if you are taking prescription pain medicine that contains *opioids* (a certain kind of drug). If you are, do **not**:
 - Drive
 - Use machinery
 - Drink alcohol
 - Sign any legal papers or other important forms
 - Be responsible for the care of another person

- You may resume all of your other usual medicines, unless your health care provider tells you not to.
- Some pain medicines can make you dizzy. This can increase your risk of falling. While you are taking pain medicine:
 - Always ask for help when you get out of bed or when you stand up after sitting.
 - Take extra care when getting out of bed. First sit on the edge of the bed. Make sure you are steady before standing up.
- Some prescription pain medicines can cause constipation. A stool softener can help. Take the stool softener as prescribed. Stop taking it if you start having loose stools.
- If you still have pain after you stop taking your prescription pain medicine, you may take acetaminophen (Tylenol).
- If you are prescribed an antibiotic, do not stop taking it unless your provider tells you to stop. It is important to complete the entire prescription.
- Keep a list of your current medicines and bring this list with you to all future health care appointments. Include the name of the medicine, the dose, how often you take it, and why you are taking it.

Bowel Movements

- It is common to have diarrhea (loose stool) after surgery. This usually goes away in a few days.
- Call your surgeon's clinic if diarrhea is a concern for you. Do not take any medicines for diarrhea unless your surgeon's team says it is OK.

When to Call Your Doctor

Call your primary healthcare provider if you have any of these symptoms in the next 7 days:

- Vomiting that will not stop, even if you are taking an antinausea medicine such as Reglan (metoclopramide)
- Back or shoulder pain that does not go away
- Increase in bleeding from your incision
- Dizziness or fainting when you stand up
- Itchy skin or a rash
- Any sign of infection around your incision:
 - Pus (drainage) that smells bad
 - Redness or swelling
 - Pain
- Other signs of infection:
 - Fever higher than 100.5°F (37.8°C)
 - Shaking or chills

If you think your condition is life-threatening, call 911 right away.

Seek care right away if:

- You feel very full and your abdomen is distended.
- You are unable to have a bowel movement.
- Your vomit is green, bloody, or looks like coffee grounds.
- Your stool looks black or tarry.
- You have chest pain or shortness of breath.
- One of your legs feels warm, tender, and painful, or it is swollen and red.
- It is hard to swallow.

Questions?

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

Surgical Specialties: 206.598.4477