

# Discharge Instructions

## Open Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm or Aortobifemoral Bypass

### Activity

- ◆ Gradually increase your activity. Start by walking short distances 2-3 times per day, increasing the length of time as tolerated. Avoid exercising in extreme temperatures.
- ◆ No twisting, bending, straining or strenuous activity for 6 weeks after your surgery. Do **NOT** lift anything over 5 pounds (a half gallon of milk) Examples of activities to avoid: swinging a golf club, vacuuming, and gardening).
- ◆ Do not drive for 2 weeks after surgery or while taking prescription pain medications. You may ride in a car.
- ◆ Avoid sitting or standing for long periods. Get up and move around every 2 hours. When sitting in a chair pump your calves, or make circles with your toes. When sitting in a chair elevate your legs above the level of your heart.
- ◆ You will take home an incentive spirometry device from the hospital. Keep it near you at home and use it 5-6 times per day for the first 2 weeks after surgery.
- ◆ If you smoke, please quit. Smoking increases your risk of developing heart disease, carotid artery disease, lung cancer, and worsens peripheral artery disease. It can also delay wound healing.

### Diet/Eating

- ◆ Resume the diet you were on prior to surgery unless otherwise instructed by your physician.
- ◆ You may want to eat 5-6 small meals a day instead of 3 larger ones. Do not be surprised if you have a decreased appetite or food has no taste for a few weeks after surgery. Your ability to taste will return and your appetite will generally increase as your activity increases. If your appetite is reduced and you are not getting enough calories a day, you can try some Ensure which can be bought at most grocery stores. (If you are diabetic, Glucerna instead of Ensure should be used).
- ◆ You will likely experience gas pains after your surgery. Walking and increasing your activity is the most effective way you can help relieve this discomfort. If constipation occurs refer to the medication section for instructions.
- ◆ For most people a low saturated fat and cholesterol diet which is high in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains is a good healthy diet unless you are otherwise directed by your physician.

### Incision

- ◆ Shower daily. Do **NOT** take a tub bath, use a whirlpool or swim until the incision is completely healed. For most people this will be at least 4 weeks after the surgery.
- ◆ Keep the incision clean and dry. It can be gently washed with soap and water. Do **NOT** scrub the incision. Pat dry with a clean towel. Dry the incision first then the rest of your body. Use a clean towel daily.
- ◆ Your incision will take several months to heal completely. It will feel raised and thickened along the incision line which will slowly decrease over time. It will take several weeks for this to resolve. Do not apply lotions, ointments, creams or bandages on the incision.
- ◆ During the first week you may notice some slight bloody drainage from the incision line. If this happens apply dry gauze to that area using a small amount of tape if needed to secure it.
- ◆ If you have incisions in the groin area, make sure these are kept clean and dry. Use dry gauze in skin folds if needed. Change as often as needed to keep the incisions dry.
- ◆ Coughing or sneezing is difficult after an abdominal surgery. Keep a pillow close at hand to help splint the abdomen when needed. Coughing is good and helps clear the lungs of mucus.
- ◆ Your incision will likely have staples. These are generally removed at the first post-operative visit.



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## Medications

### You have been prescribed

- ☐ Aspirin 81 mg daily
- ☐ Plavix 75 mg daily
- ☐ Coumadin
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

### It is VERY important that you take these medications as directed.

- ◆ You will be given a prescription for pain medication. Take it as directed. Do not use alcohol with prescription pain medications. If you are having mild pain you can use over the counter Acetaminaphen (Tylenol). Take it as directed on the package. Use the prescription medication for moderate pain. Do not take Tylenol at the same time as prescription pain medication.
- ◆ One of the side effects of narcotic pain medications is constipation and nausea. Most people will have nausea if it is taken on an empty stomach. Eat a small snack with pain medication to avoid this side effect. Drinking plenty of fluid and eating high fiber foods (fruits, vegetables and whole grains) can help prevent constipation. If needed you can take Docusate Sodium (Colace) 100 mg, a stool softener, once or twice a day. This can be purchased at most drug stores. A laxative may be needed if the constipation continues. Generally, an over the counter laxative, like Dulcolax tablets, will be recommended (take it as directed on the packaging). If you take one dose of this laxative and your constipation is not relieved, call your nurse practitioner or physician assistant for further instructions.
- ◆ An updated medication list will be given to you before you leave the hospital. New prescriptions will be provided to you and education regarding new medications provided. Please take the time to read this information. It is important for you to have a good understanding of what medications you are taking.

## Call Your Surgeon for Any of These Symptoms @ (478) 743-9762

- ◆ Leg swelling does not improve with frequent elevation above the level of the heart. **(Reminder: Lower leg and foot swelling is common after this procedure. If this happens elevate your legs when you are reclining above the level of your heart. The swelling may last for several weeks.**
- ◆ Your leg becomes cold, painful or numb.
- ◆ There is bleeding at the incision that does not stop when pressure is applied.
- ◆ The incision has increasing pain, redness, swelling or draining pus.
- ◆ Leaking of fluid from the incision.
- ◆ Increasing abdominal (belly) pain, unable to pass gas, nausea or vomiting.
- ◆ You have chest pain or shortness of breath.
- ◆ You have chills or a fever over 101 degrees F.

## Reducing your risk

- ◆ All patients with vascular disease should take important steps to prevent worsening of their condition or development of new disease. It is very important that if you smoke, you quit. Adequate management of high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and diabetes, along with maintaining a normal weight is encouraged to all of our patients. This is one of the reasons why routine follow-up with your primary care physician is very important to your continued health and well-being.

## Follow-up Appointment

- ◆ A follow-up appointment will be made for you prior to leaving the hospital. It will be 2-3 weeks after your surgery. It is extremely important that you make it to this appointment for evaluation and recommendations for follow-up. Additionally, you need to make an appointment to see your primary care physician within 1-2 weeks of being discharged from the hospital.

## Returning to Work

- ◆ Returning to work is generally discussed at the follow-up visit. If you have a desk job you may be able to return to work in 4-6 weeks, as long as you can move around frequently. If you have a job that requires physical labor you may be off work for about 12 weeks.