

What You Should Know About Your Surgery

Pain Control

Discomfort is common after surgery. Controlling pain (to a tolerable level) and minimizing side effects are important for your recovery and rehabilitation.

Here are some things you should talk to your doctor about before you have surgery:

- Ask about the type of pain you can expect from the procedure.
- Discuss your previous experiences with pain. Mention what has worked for you and what has not.
- Let your doctor know if you take medications for chronic pain.
- Make your doctor aware of any current use of alcohol or recreational drugs.

Here are some things you can do to control pain after your surgery:

- Take your pain medication (as prescribed).
- Change your position.
- Lie down, relax, and take slow, deep breaths.
- Hold a folded blanket or pillow against your incision when you deep-breathe or cough.
- If you had surgery on an arm or leg, elevate it on two pillows placed lengthwise.
- Apply ice or heat as directed by your physician.

Nausea/Vomiting

Nausea could occur as a side effect of medications given to you during or after surgery. Nausea may lead to vomiting. This could prevent you from drinking an adequate amount of fluids, which could cause dehydration.

Here are some things you can do to control nausea:

- Slowly drink small amounts of clear fluids such as water, diluted fruit juice, low calorie sport drinks or dissolve some ice chips in your mouth.
- Drink enough to keep your urine clear or pale yellow.
- If you are able, slowly eat small quantities of bland, easy to digest foods such as: bananas, applesauce, rice, toast, or saltine crackers.
- Stock some of the recommended foods and fluids in your home prior to surgery.
- Avoid fluids that have a lot of sugar or caffeine in them such as soda or energy drinks.
- Avoid spicy foods such as pizza and fatty foods, such as French fries.

Post-Surgical Bleeding

Keep in mind that a small amount of bleeding from your surgical area can be expected in the first 24-48 hours.

Notify your physician or call 911 if:

- You notice a steady trickle of blood from your surgical area that will not stop.
- Blood soaks your dressing (if you have one).
- You vomit or cough up bright red blood.
- Vaginal bleeding greater than one pad per hour (if you had female surgery).

Infection Prevention

Here are some things you can do at home to prevent an infection of your surgical incision:

Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water before and after touching your incision. Refer to instruction sheet for hand washing.

Showering (when permitted by your doctor). No tub baths until incision is healed.

- Keep several freshly laundered towels and washcloths on stock so they are ready before your arrival home from surgery.
- Use freshly-laundered washcloths and towels for each shower or bath.
- Use liquid body wash or the liquid soap provided by the hospital. Avoid bar soap because it attracts bacteria.
- Gently wash your incision.
- Next, wash your body with a separate, clean washcloth.
- Rinse with warm water.
- Gently pat your incision dry with a towel.
- Then dry the remainder of your body with a separate towel.
- Put used towels and washcloths in your soiled linen basket to be washed.
- Dress in freshly-laundered clothing or pajamas.

Bed Linens

- Keep an extra set or two of freshly-laundered bed linens on- stock so they are ready before your arrival home from surgery.
- Make sure bed linens are freshly-laundered before your arrival home from surgery and once a week thereafter.
- If bed linens are visibly soiled, change them.

Some Things to Avoid

- Avoid pulling off adhesive strips, if applied to your incision. Leave them alone until they fall off.
- Avoid touching or scratching your incision.
- Avoid creams, ointments, powders or perfume to your incision area.
- Avoid pets near your incision or in your bed. This prevents dander from entering your incision.
- Avoid activities that could cause dirt or sand to enter your incision.
- Avoid swimming pools or hot tubs until your incision heals.

The staff at Indiana Regional Medical Center wish you a rapid recovery!