

# ABDOMINOPLASTY (TUMMY TUCK) CARE INSTRUCTIONS

RE PLASTIC SURGERY - MR. LOK HUEI YAP FRCS (PLASTIC SURGERY)

## BEFORE THE OPERATION

1. AVOID ASPIRIN OR ASPIRIN-CONTAINING MEDICATIONS for a period of 7-10 days before surgery, unless there is a strong medical reason for taking Aspirin. Aspirin makes the blood less effective at clotting and may increase bleeding and bruising, as do many other medications with names ending in '-phen' or '-fen'. Please review the enclosed list of medications that may contain aspirin. For mild to moderate pain, Paracetamol is preferred.
2. Stop smoking for at least six weeks before surgery, and ideally discontinue smoking permanently after surgery, as cigarette smoke contains substances including nicotine which act to reduce blood supply in tissues, increasing the risk of wound failure and skin death. Nicotine patches should also be discontinued.
3. Please report any sign of a cough, cold, boils or skin eruptions appearing within one week of surgery. For your own safety, if you have a cough or a cold, the operation will probably be postponed to avoid infective or airways complications.
4. Reduce your alcohol intake in the pre- and post-operative period, as alcohol can have an effect on blood vessels.
5. Most dietary supplements should be discontinued a month before surgery, particularly Vitamin E preparations which can cause increased bleeding and bruising. Vitamin C preparations can be taken after the operation and may help wound healing.
6. Discontinue the oral contraceptive pill for six weeks before surgery and use alternate methods of contraception, to minimize the risks of DVT (deep venous thrombosis).
7. For a period of three days prior to surgery, wash your abdomen, lower trunk and perineum with antibacterial soap.
8. Arrange for someone to drive you home after surgery.

## THE NIGHT BEFORE YOUR OPERATION

1. NOTHING TO EAT OR DRINK AFTER MIDNIGHT.
2. Wash abdomen and perineum for over two minutes with antibacterial soap.

## THE DAY OF YOUR OPERATION

1. NOTHING TO EAT OR DRINK.
2. Do not take medications, herbal remedies, or supplements, unless they have been prescribed for you.
3. Wear loose-fitting, comfortable clothes that do not have to be pulled over your head.
4. Storage space will be provided for your personal effects, but do not bring valuables with you to the hospital.

## AFTER YOUR OPERATION

1. You will have plastic tubes (drains) placed underneath the abdominal skin at surgery. These serve to remove excess tissue fluid and blood from inside the wounds. They are usually removed before you go home. If drainage is significant, you may be discharged home with the drains present. Please make a daily note of how much is drained and keep a log for your follow-up visit, when the drains will be removed.
2. Arrange for someone you can rely on, to drive you home and spend the first two days with you. Additional instructions and advice can be given to the person looking after you.
3. You will have some mild to moderate discomfort after the procedure and should take regular pain relieving medication (Paracetamol) for the first week after surgery. More significant pain can be managed with oral narcotic medications.
4. **DO NOT TAKE ASPIRIN, ASPIRIN-CONTAINING PRODUCTS OR OTHER ANTI-INFLAMMATORY MEDICATIONS** (e.g. Ibuprofen, Brufen, Nurofen, Alleve) for two weeks after surgery, as this may cause prolonged bleeding or additional bruising during the early post-operative period.
5. Do take your medications as prescribed, particularly your oral antibiotics unless you experience a gastrointestinal disturbance or skin rash. If you are constipated, do take some over-the-counter laxatives. Straining at stool should be avoided, as this may cause an increased risk of bleeding in the wounds.
6. Your abdomen will be wrapped in a supportive elasticated garment. This should be snug but not too tight, and should cover the whole of the breast. There will be additional bandaging underneath. Please avoid getting the wound wet for first week, and wear the support garment day and night for at least 4 weeks after surgery.
7. There may be some tightness in the abdominal skin, which should improve over time. You may find it helpful to sleep with pillows under your knees and legs to help reduce the tension on the abdominal skin.
8. Please call the Practice to arrange a follow-up appointment for approximately one week after surgery. At this appointment, your wound will be inspected, and if well-healed you can resume bathing.
9. Avoid alcohol or cigarette smoking for at least 3 weeks after surgery.
10. Mr. Yap will assess your scar and the need for scar therapy. This will start at 2 – 3 weeks post-surgery, if needed, and you will be advised regarding the appropriate scar creams.
11. Do not expose your scars to direct sunlight for 12 months after surgery. Use sunblock with a minimum sun protection factor (SPF) of 15.
12. Avoid hot water bottles or heating pads to your abdomen immediately after surgery, as there will be portions of the abdomen which have reduced sensation, and as such you are at risk of causing a burn. Similarly, when having a shower, take care as you may not realise how hot the water is due to the reduced sensitivity of the abdominal skin.
13. Do commence a regular programme of walking around your home, avoiding complete inactivity. Gentle exercises can be commenced 4 weeks after surgery, while gym or strenuous physical activity should be re-commenced not earlier than 6 weeks after surgery. This return to exercise should be gradual.
14. You should not drive for at least 3 weeks after surgery, and even then only if you are confident that you are capable of carrying out an emergency stop.

15. Your level of activity at work will influence when you return to work. Most patients will be able to return to work within 2 weeks if their job is not physically demanding. If you have a more physical occupation, you will require a longer recovery time, typically 4 weeks, before returning to work.

IF ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING OCCUR, PLEASE CALL THE PRACTICE IMMEDIATELY:

- a) Fresh bleeding from the wound, more than a simple ooze
- b) Rapid enlargement of the surgical site, associated with pain and bruising
- c) Significant pain not relieved by simple painkillers
- d) Wound discharge after 48 – 72 hours
- e) Temperature greater than 38.5° C

### WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

1. Your abdomen will be tender and swollen for the first 1 – 2 weeks after surgery.
2. The abdomen will feel tight, especially if a significant amount of skin has been removed. You may find it difficult to straighten up after surgery, although this will improve over the coming weeks.
3. The abdomen will usually be less sensitive to touch and temperature after surgery. Recovery of sensation in the abdomen may take weeks to months, and as this happens you may feel some tingling, 'electric shock' type sensations in the skin or deeper tissues. This is part of normal recovery.
4. Occasionally, fluid can accumulate underneath the wounds. This may require intermittent removal by syringe aspiration.
5. Your sutures are absorbable and do not need to be removed. They are buried and should resorb over the coming 6 to 8 months. There may be some small areas in the incisions which will feel firmer before softening.
6. The scars will be healed by about two weeks after surgery but may remain raised, pink, sensitive or reddened for some months. Final settling and resolution of the scars may take up to 2 years.

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