Abdominal Wall Hernia Repair
(Ventral Hernia)

Patient & Family Information

This pamphlet will give you guidelines to follow after your hernia repair. If you have any questions please ask your nurse or doctor.

What is a Hernia?
Often called a rupture, a hernia occurs when an organ or fat pushes out from the cavity it is in, due to a weakness in the supporting tissue.

Hernias of the abdominal wall include:
- Epigastric Hernias - ruptures between the breast bone and the umbilicus (tummy button)
- Umbilical Hernias - small ruptures around the umbilicus
- Incisional Hernias - ruptures through an incision line

A mesh type of fabric may be inserted on the inside to provide support for large hernia repairs and recurrent hernias. The mesh remains in the body. Mersilene or Marlex are strong, long lasting synthetic mesh products.

After Your Surgery
You will have some pain:
You can expect some pain and discomfort in the area of your operation. Take the pain medicine as ordered by your doctor for the first 48 hours. This helps you move around more easily and feel more comfortable. You may have muscle soreness from the general anaesthetic. This will slowly go away as you move about.

Wound:
Your incision will be closed with staples, stitches or paper tapes;
- Paper tapes - peel them off one week after you leave the hospital (pull them off by lifting each end and pulling towards the middle)
- Stitches - will dissolve on their own
- Staples - before you go home know when and where you go to have them removed

Always wash your hands before and after touching your wound.

Medicines:
If you are given a prescription for medicines, fill it as soon as you can and take it as your pharmacist tells you. If you are on antibiotics, it is important to take them all as ordered until they are gone.

Diet:
- You may have an upset stomach (nausea). Ask the nurse for medicine for this. When home, you can buy medicine for nausea at your drugstore.
- A light diet is best, eating more as you feel like it. Be sure your meals include protein, fruit, vegetables, bran and milk products. Drink 8 to 10 glasses of water a day.
- It is important that you do not become constipated and strain to have a bowel movement. If this is a concern, talk to your pharmacist.
Showering:
- You may shower after your dressing is off, or as your doctor suggests.

Activity:
- At home have rest times during the day, and slowly become more active. Daily walks are good. Do not lift anything over 10 pounds (groceries, child, briefcase, no vacuuming, and no shovelling) until your doctor says you can. You can expect your recovery to take about 6 weeks.
- Be sure to ask your doctor when you can return to exercise classes and other types of taxing activities.

Work:
Ask your doctor when you can return to work.

Phone your doctor or go to the Emergency Department where you had surgery if:
- You have a large amount of bright red bleeding from your incision.
- Your medicine is not helping your pain.
- Your incision feels hot, looks red and swollen.
- Your incision drainage has a foul smell.
- You are having fever or chills.
- You have redness, firmness, tenderness, swelling or heat in the calf of your leg.

You are a partner with us in planning your care. Ask questions, and be sure you are clear about how you will manage when you go home.

Please make a follow-up appointment to see your doctor.

Guidelines to Follow After Having a General Anaesthetic:
The medications given to you during surgery may remain in your body for as long as 48 hours. They may alter how you think and do things. Because of this, for 48 hours do not:
- drive
- drink any alcohol
- decide on any legal or money matters

For general information or if you have any questions and you cannot contact your doctor, please phone:
HEALTHLink Alberta
1-800-408-5465 (LINK) Health advice 24 hours a day