

LAPAROTOMY INSTRUCTIONS

A laparotomy or large incision in the abdomen is created when minimally invasive techniques are not adequate or safe to perform a particular surgery.

Preparing for surgery:

- Shower and shampoo your hair before surgery
- Eat a light meal the night before
- If you smoke, quit or cut down at least 4 weeks prior to procedure
- Make arrangements for another adult to drive you home after surgery.
- Do not eat or drink anything after midnight the night before your surgery. This includes water, gum, or mints. You can brush your teeth.
- If you have been told to take any medications, you may take them with a small sip of water

Day of surgery:

- Wear loose-fitting clothes that are easy to remove. You will change into a hospital gown.
- Do not use any make up, hairspray, or perfume.
- Remove all jewelry or body piercings. Leave any valuables at home.
- You will be asked to remove contact lenses, hearing aids or dentures.
- The preoperative nurse will insert an IV line for fluids and medications.

The procedure:

- General or local anesthetic with sedation is administered. This helps you relax and sleep during the procedure. It will prevent you from feeling pain during the operation.
- **An incision will be made in the abdomen as small as possible to perform the surgery safely.** Bowel obstructions may need larger incisions because the visualization is limited.
- You may have a tube in your nose, called a nasogastric tube, once you wake up. This helps minimize the effect of bowel paralysis after surgery
- A nerve block is created inside your abdomen to help in pain control after surgery

Hospital Stay:

- Diet will be advanced slowly by your surgeon during hospitalization
- A multimodal pain regimen will be instituted for pain control and home medications re-started
- You will be discharged once your pain is controlled, you have shown evidence of bowel function, you can take care of yourself, and you feel ready
- Your surgeon will visit you every day and make adjustments to your management; questions are always encouraged
- Call my office to make a post-operative appointment prior to leaving the hospital

Your Dressing:

- A drain may have been placed. You will be given instructions on how to empty the drain.

- You may have a clear dressing (surgical glue) applied. You may shower with this on, it will fall off by itself
- You may have staples or sutures in place. These will typically be removed on your postoperative appointment
- You can shower using soap and water. Pat the area dry and do not apply any type of ointment. You do not need to apply another outer dressing unless you have some drainage from the incision
- If given an abdominal binder, wear it during the day while active and moving around. You may take it off for rest, sleep, and shower. Keep wearing it until your post-operative visit.
- Some Bloody drainage from the incision is expected and healthy, just collect the drainage with gauze and keep area covered if any drainage occurs

Restrictions

- Avoid heavy lifting greater than 15lbs for 4 weeks
- Avoid straining, or strenuous activities for 3-4 weeks. Being active by walking will help you heal, but don't over do it.
- Avoid soaking the incision in water, no Hot tub, pool or Beach for 4 weeks
- Do not apply any ointments on the incision
- Pain medication can contribute to constipation so only take it if needed. If you feel constipated, drink plenty of fluids, try pineapple juice or prune juice, and you may take Miralax, Docusate, or Milk of Magnesia or another laxative that has worked in the past.

Medication / Pain Relief:

- You will be given a prescription for narcotic pain medication. You should take them with food to avoid an upset stomach. Constipation is common. You do not have to take these medications if you do not need them.
- For milder pain, you can use Extra Strength Tylenol and Ibuprofen. In addition, use an ice pack on the incision during the first 24 hours following surgery; or a heating pad after that. Do not fall asleep with a heating pad as it can cause burns.
- My preferred regimen for pain management is Tylenol 500mg every 4 hours, Ibuprofen 600mg every 6 hours (with food) and narcotics for breakthrough and severe pain.
- If you feel constipated, drink plenty of fluids, try pineapple juice or prune juice, and you may take Miralax, Docusate, or Milk of Magnesia or another laxative that has worked in the past.

When to call your doctor:

- Fever over 101 degrees
- Unusual drainage from the incision, some yellowish (serous) and red (bloody) drainage would be expected
- Red, hard, hot, or painful area around the incision
- Severe pain unrelieved by pain medication
- Nausea or vomiting is common for the first 48 hours, but persistent nausea and vomiting lasting longer than 24 hours can be worrisome
- Inability to urinate 6-8 hours after procedure

Contact information

- Call Intercoastal Medical Group (IMG)
- Lakewood office 941-362-8662, The answering service will be available after 5pm, and you will be able to reach the “on call” physician
- Cattleman office 941-341-0042, from 12-1 pm the answering service will be on
- You can reach Dr. Hernandez through the portal for non-urgent problems or questions