

## Postoperative Care after Abdominoplasty:

A family member or friend must take you home after surgery, because you will be unable to drive. Please ask a responsible person to stay with you overnight. Try to take it easy and pamper yourself. Try to avoid any straining. You may go to the bathroom, sit and watch TV, but no matter how good you feel, do not clean the house or re-arrange the attic, etc. We do not want you to bleed and cause any more swelling and bruising. You will have a loosely applied dressing over your incision on your belly and umbilicus. This typically becomes wet with wound seepage, and you can change this with absorbent gauze (ABD) (Sanitary napkins work well). You notice that a small dressing has been placed over your umbilicus. Please leave that alone for about three days.

You will notice an immediate tightness in your abdomen and inability to immediately stand up straight. When you are in bed, try to place a number of pillows under your knees and under your back in order to keep your hips slightly flexed. This will relieve some of the discomfort and tension in the first few days.

During your last preoperative visit you have been given three different types of prescriptions. For pain a combination of Demerol and an anti-nausea pill has been prescribed. You can take this every three hours as needed, and as many as two tablets are allowed. Try to slowly titrate the narcotic dose after you come home. Start with a half tablet and work your way up to two tablets.

A side effect of narcotics is clamping down of your stomach and intestines, which will quickly result in nausea and possible throwing up. The second prescription is for Tigan, which comes in a suppository and can be used in case of nausea. Please feel free to use it early and frequently as needed for nausea.

Finally, a prescription for Halcion 0.25 mg. has been given to aid you in sleeping during those first few postoperative days. Try to get your pain under control with the narcotics, and then take the sleeping pill. You may be able to sleep through the night with the aid of this pill, thereby reducing the need for taking reported doses of narcotics. This will greatly reduce the hangover associated with narcotics in the next few days. You may use ice packs on areas to relieve some of the pain, but if you prefer not to use these that would be okay too.

**During the first 24** hours try to get out of bed and walk around in your room about two or three times. This is to promote circulation in your legs and may help prevent a blood clot from occurring in the deep veins in your legs.

**The First Postoperative Week:** During this time you notice that the discomfort and pain are slowly decreasing, and you will be up and about much more frequently. The first postoperative day you will still be significantly bent at the waist, and you will feel extremely “tight.” Over the next few days slowly try to raise back to an upright posture. This will take about three or four

days to accomplish. Do not worry. You will not pull your wounds open or cause the tissues to disrupt. Slowly work up to walking erect again over the next week. There is no rush.

**During your first postoperative week** you will come see us back in the office, and we will check you for possible blood clots, remove drain tubes if they have been placed in the operating room, and change your dressing. Usually after the third day you are allowed to take a shower. Do take a shower and avoid going in a hot tub or in the bathtub. Soaking in soapy water, with your wounds only partially sealed, may cause an infectious problem, but showering is allowed. Small steri-strips have been placed across your abdominal incision, and they are allowed to become wet. All other dressings can be left off, but the steri-strips should remain in place. You'll notice over the next three to four days the steri-strips will lose their adhesiveness and will start falling off. Approximately seven to ten days after surgery, we'll start removing some of the sutures in the office. Don't remove these sutures at home. If one of them is "poking" you or seems to be particularly bothersome, give us a call, and we'll see if we can find some relief.

**After your first postoperative visit**, you may be asked to use a compression garment, if extensive liposuction was associated with this procedure. After the first week the swelling will start to resolve, and you will resume an upright position. A minority may notice two puckers at the lateral aspects of your incisions. Sometimes these can be quite large, but usually they're very small. These will disappear over the next few weeks to few months. Rarely do we have to do a small revision to relieve these "dog ears."

A few problems associated with the first week after surgery need to be addressed aggressively. **HEMATOMA**: If you notice a large blood clot, which manifests itself as a rock hard ball the size of a tennis ball or softball, in your abdomen, it may have to be relieved with either needle aspiration or re-operation, although small ones usually these resolve spontaneously.

A second problem of **infection** will manifest itself by a high fever, usually on the fifth to sixth postoperative day, and redness occurring and spreading in normally uninjured skin. If these problems occur, please notify us, so we can obtain a culture and start you on appropriate antibiotics.

Avoid lifting anything heavier than a telephone book over the next few weeks, until the internal sutures have completely healed. This takes approximately six weeks to three months. Usually at six weeks most people have returned to their regular duties. Bruising may have occurred immediately after surgery, and papaya and bromelin tablets help to speed the resolution of bruising (these are available in health food stores). Your incisions will remain quite red, usually for a period of several months. If you notice any unusual thickening or hardening of the scars, please contact us. We can sometimes relieve this with an injection of certain types of medications.

Final results after abdominoplasty usually takes a few months to show, and the final resolution of the scars, and ultimately the final appearance of the scars, are usually not evident until 6-12 months postoperatively.

Please feel free to ask us any other questions during your postoperative care. I hope you have a speedy recovery. Again, we are available night and day by calling 993-2222.