



## AFTER SURGERY

Although patients will discuss the specifics of their surgery personally with their physician, following are some general expectations and information to help guide you.

### What Can I Eat after Surgery?

Water, light liquids, low sodium broths, apple juice, ginger ale, ice pops and soups are all fine the day of your surgery and thereafter. Avoid orange, tomato juice or citrus juices. Toast and crackers may be all you can tolerate the first day, with an increasing return to your regular diet by day two. You may gradually add foods. Hydration is key; drink water and eat foods containing fiber like fruits and vegetables. Also refer to our post-op constipation article at <https://centerforendo.com/postopcon> for more information.

### Will I Need Pads or Tampons after Surgery?

Some light vaginal bleeding/spotting is expected after surgery. You can use panty liners as needed. Do not put anything in your vagina until the tissues are healed, including tampons, douches or engage in any form of sexual activity involving the vagina.

### How Should I Care for my Incisions after Surgery?

Laparoscopic incisions are very small and rarely have complications or infection. Pain from these incisions is usually mild, though it may last for a few days. You may take off the bandages covering the incisions 24 hours after your surgery. They do not need to be replaced; if you wish, you may cover with a Band-Aid®. Steri-Strips will fall off by themselves in about a week or two. Stitches will dissolve on their own over time. Do not expose your incisions to direct sunlight or artificial tanning; this area will burn easily.

- Keep the incision and surrounding skin dry and clean.
- Gently wash the incisions, including the belly button incision, with ONLY soapy water, and thoroughly dry the entire area.
- Do NOT scrub or soak the wound.
- Do NOT use rubbing alcohol, hydrogen peroxide, or iodine.
- Avoid clothing that can rub and irritate your incisions.
- Do not replace navel piercings until at least 48 hours after your surgery.

**Normal:** pain, itching, bruising, pulling sensation, numbness around the incisions.

**Call Us Immediately:** an incision has become hot, red, swollen or increasingly painful; has increasing white, yellow or green discharge (which may also be accompanied by a bad odor); excessive bleeding; fever.

### When Can I Return to Activity after Surgery?

All expectations and return to normal activity will be addressed with you personally at the time of your surgery. On average, however, most individuals can expect a 2-3 week post-op return to increasing activity. Gradually increase your activity level as you are able.

- Rest: it is entirely normal to tire easily after surgery. Be sure you are getting enough rest.
- Walk: getting adequate rest is important. However, it is also important to take small, short walks several times a day after surgery to help prevent potential complications like blood clots, pneumonia or persistent shoulder pain (related to the gas; see our article on post-op shoulder pain at <https://centerforendo.com/post-surgical-shoulder-pain>).
- Stairs: you can climb stairs about 72 hours after surgery unless otherwise directed by your surgeon.
- Driving: riding in a car is fine (wear your seatbelt); do not drive, however, until you can move about easily and no longer require narcotic pain medication. For traveling home after surgery, please see <https://centerforendo.com/traveling-to-cec>.
- Light work around the house & cooking: as tolerated.
- Lifting objects: lifting impedes healing. Avoid lifting anything over 10 lbs. for at least 2 weeks (up to six weeks if hysterectomy was performed); a general rule of thumb is, if the object cannot be lifted with one hand, ask for help.
- Sports/exercise: light exercise, some sports and pool swimming can generally be resumed in about one-two weeks, depending on how you feel. Ocean/lake/pond swimming can be resumed in about two-three weeks. No hot tubs for at least two weeks. Again - avoid lifting anything over 10 lbs. for at least 2 weeks; longer depending on the nature of the surgery performed.
- Shower: showering (no baths!) are permitted approximately 48-72 hours after surgery (ask your surgeon).
- Pain medication: take your pain medication as prescribed. Taking more than the recommended dose, not taking at the prescribed intervals, or mixing any medications can be dangerous.

### **When Can I Return to Work after Surgery?**

When post-op pain is gone (or minimal) and you are able to do your job. The specifics of one's work dictates their return time; a person who sits at their job can likely return sooner than someone whose work requires standing, long drives, walking and/or lifting. Generally speaking, most patients report returning to work around three weeks post-operatively, depending on the nature of their procedures and the specifics of their case (some may require longer).

### **When Can I have Sex after Surgery?**

Again, you should not put anything in your vagina until the tissues are healed. For sexual intercourse, wait *at least* 7 days; a minimum of 2 weeks if hysterectomy was performed.

### **What If I Have Ongoing Pain or Issues after Surgery?**

You need to call us as soon as possible. **Our phone number, monitored 24 hrs a day, 7 days a week, is 770-913-0001.** Call if you experience any of the following:

- Shortness of breath or chest pain
- Heavy vaginal bleeding (heavier than a menstrual period and/or which completely soaks a large pad), and/or which continues for more than an hour
- Continued nausea/vomiting for longer than a day that makes it impossible for you to eat or drink
- Fever of 101°F/38°C or above by thermometer reading; may be accompanied by chills
- Incision changes as noted above
- Persistent mental confusion/disorientation
- Abdominal swelling, especially accompanied by severe/sudden pain
- Pain that is not being managed by medication
- Swelling in an arm or leg that is greater on one side vs. the other
- Foul-smelling, green or yellow vaginal discharge
- Unable to empty bladder/burning with urination
- Blood in urine or bloody stool
- Unable to move bowels for 3 days, or alternately, diarrhea two or more times a day

***As always, your personal discussion with your surgeon will direct your specific care and expectations. Of course; if you have any questions or concerns, you can always call us anytime. We are here to help!***

For additional, generalized information, please visit our website at <http://www.centerforendo.com>; be sure to read our *Frequently Asked Questions* at <https://centerforendo.com/faq> and download the CEC's surgery guide by Wendy Winer, RN, BSN, CNOR, RNFA at <https://bit.ly/2SQE5x9>.

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