

A BETTER YOU COSMETIC SURGERY CENTER**POSTOPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS-ABDOMINOPLASTY**

POST-OP: The first 24 hours are best spent resting. Stay in bed the first day except for taking care of necessary functions. You must have someone with you at all times for the first 24 hours and he/she must also read these instructions carefully. You should have someone assist you when you first start ambulating (moving around).

You can expect drainage (usually bloody) from the wounds for first day or two, swelling, bruising and discoloration. One side may be a bit different from the other during the first few days and weeks, both as far as pain and swelling are concerned. The contour may be irregular, but generally it settles with the help of time and gravity.

When general anesthesia is used, the tube placed in the throat may cause the throat to be sore. This is best relieved with cold liquids. The soreness disappears in a few days.

DIET: If you have no nausea, then you can take liquids. If liquids are tolerated, then mild, bland foods may be tried next. Once these are adequately ingested, a normal diet may be resumed.

ACTIVITY: No strenuous activity is allowed for 6 weeks. Take it easy and pamper yourself. Try to avoid straining. When lying down be certain not to lie flat, but to elevate your head on two or more pillows as well as your knees and feet. Avoid waterbeds... Slowly increase your activities after the first week. The more leg movements the better, for circulation. General guidelines are to avoid strenuous exercise for the first six weeks. **NO LIFTING OVER 10LBS FOR THE NEXT 6 WEEKS. NO GYM FOR 6 WEEKS.** If you want to avoid or minimize complications, you must follow these instructions carefully. Specifically **DO NOT DO HOUSEWORK for the first 3 weeks! NO MATTER HOW GOOD YOU FEEL. DO NOT MAKE SUDDEN MOVEMENTS (such as getting out of bed, chair, or car seat quickly), as this will contribute to fluid formation.** No driving at least until the seventh day after surgery, when you are no longer taking pain medication and you are comfortable doing the motions required to drive a car. At that point, you may begin short trips. You may ride in the car earlier than this, but you must not take extended drives (more than about 10 miles) for the week. During your third week, you may begin performing some light housework, slowly cleaning one room of the house, but not the whole house. During the fourth week some activity may be started if comfortable. Your first return appointment will be 1 week after surgery and your second will be at 3 weeks after your surgery. During your third follow-up appointment (at 6 weeks), we will probably release you to all activities including any athletic hobbies, such as running, weight lifting aerobics, racquet sports, etc., but it may be another six weeks before you regain your preoperative exercise tolerance.

SHOWERING: You may not shower until you are seen by Dr. Gentile and your drain is removed at 1 week. After you shower (your 2nd week), you must immediately reapply the compressive garment (this is the best time to wash it). The tape strips (steri-strips) and any other tape must be left in place! You must continue wearing the compression garment for 6 weeks continuously. No bathing in tubs is allowed for 6 weeks.

COMPRESSIVE

GARMENT: THE COMPRESSIVE GARMENT MUST BE LEFT IN PLACE FOR SIX WEEKS CONTINUOUSLY, EXCEPT FOR WHEN YOU SHOWER. Again, do not remove the garment until the drain is removed at approximately 1 week. The lower band of the garment must always cover the wound. The garment helps to decrease swelling and it will enhance your final results. Sometimes patients wear them for three months or more. After the 2nd week you can also purchase a very tight girdle and wear the compressive garment over it (some of our patients feel more comfortable).

DRESSINGS: DO NOT REMOVE THE TAPE STRIPS (steri-strips). They will self-remove in 3-6 weeks. **DO NOT USE HEATING PADS OR COLD PACKS.**

SUNSHINE/

TANNING: You **may not tan** for 6 weeks after surgery. This includes tanning beds (never recommended). After 6 weeks, you may begin tanning slowly. Continued tanning may cause splotches to become permanent. The skin will be very sensitive for several months, and you may sunburn the skin without knowing it. Use the combination of Zinc and Titanium Oxide as this blocks UVA and UVB wavelengths at all times when exposed to the sun.

SMOKING: ABSOLUTELY NO SMOKING is allowed, and stay away from others who smoke! Smoking significantly increases the development of complications resulting in lengthy and problematic recoveries.

CLOTHING: For ease in changing clothes without discomfort, wear clothing that is of the loose sporting/jogging type for the first few days.

DRAIN: The drain will be removed by Dr. Gentile in 7-10 days. You will be instructed on its care and you need to empty it and record the drainage daily. Make sure after you empty it that it remains squeezed (= on suction). You are not allowed to shower while you have the drain and also be careful: do not place yourself in any position that may inadvertently pull the drain out.

WOUNDS: Use **only normal saline to clean wounds** (definitely do not use hydrogen peroxide, alcohol, Mederma or other products, etc.). Healing is a gradual process and most scars will fade over time without medical intervention. If you wish to apply a topical cream, we recommend using 100% Aloe Vera gel 3 or 4 times per day, especially to release itching. Should you notice an opening and drainage along your wound (this usually occurs around 2-4 weeks after your surgery), do not be alarmed: usually it is not an infectious process but it is caused by choking off of your small vessels because of the stretching and tension placed on your skin and tissues. This results in lack of blood supply (= no oxygen and nutrients) necessary for healing and therefore the wound opens. This occurs more frequently in obese patients. The wound will heal spontaneously in weeks but your belly button, if involved, can take longer. You can speed up the healing process by applying gauze wet in saline solution (= Wet to Dry); it will stick to the wound and when you remove it you will also remove the debris. You should clean the wound in the shower twice daily and then apply the wet to dry gauze. The water from the shower- head acts like a power washer. If the wound is larger than 1 inch, if it is painful and the surrounding area is very red, please call the office so that we can arrange to see you as soon as possible.

SENSITIVITY: Nerves in the area of the surgery are frequently irritable after the surgery. This may show up by decreased sensation (numbness) or more frequently with oversensitivity of the skin. Usually this resolves in a few weeks but occasionally it may take months.

PROBLEMS: If you have any problems or questions following surgery, please call our office at **(361) 881-9999**. We will be glad to answer any questions over the phone during the daytime from 9:00-5:00, or if the need arises to see you at anytime. When the office is closed, a voice mail system will relay your message and your call will be returned within a few minutes. Please be sure to leave your name and a telephone number where you can be reached (make sure you speak with a loud and clear voice and that you keep your telephone line free).

PAIN MEDICATION: Pain medication makes recovery more tolerable and prevents a rise in blood pressure. Take Hydrocodone (Lortab) and Hydroxyzine (Vistaril) by mouth every 3-4 hours as needed for pain. If you are asleep, the family should not wake you to take the pain medication. Most people do not need medication after two days. You are encouraged to take this medication for the first few days but take them only as needed. Be certain to eat something when taking your pain medication (i.e. cookies, crackers, milk, food, etc.) When using prescribed pain medication, **DO NOT** drink alcoholic beverages or operate motor vehicles. Pain medicine refills **WILL NOT** be called in after hours or on weekends, so anticipate if it looks like you may run out! All pain medicines can be constipating. After you are back on a normal diet, eat fruits or drink fruit juices. You may take a mild laxative (such as Correctol or Milk of Magnesia) if necessary. If you have a tendency towards constipation, consider taking a laxative the day before your surgery.

TAMPON USE DURING SURGERY: We advise our patients who are menstruating around the time of their surgery to use sanitary napkins rather than tampons, to avoid Toxic Shock Syndrome. We do **NOT** want you to wear a tampon to surgery, as it may be left in place for an extended period of time. Also, while you are taking medication (i.e. pain medication), you may forget to change your tampons in a timely manner. Therefore, we ask that if you are menstruating, that you use a sanitary napkin.

REMEMBER THAT TUMMY TUCK (ABDOMINOPLASTY), DIET AND EXERCISE COMPLEMENT THEMSELVES.

WATCH CLOSELY FOR POTENTIAL PROBLEMS AND CALL THE OFFICE IMMEDIATELY AT (361) 881-9999 IF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING OCCUR:

1. Marked swelling on one side or the other. This is something that would be **VERY NOTICEABLE**. This could be a sign of bleeding in the area of your surgery. To prevent formation or collection of fluids and blood, a drain is placed for 4-7 days. Make sure it is working, if not call Dr. Gentile.
2. Signs of infection. This usually takes 3 to 5 days and shows up by becoming more painful instead of less painful; red; swollen; purulent drainage from the wound; red streaks; fever of 101 degrees or more.
3. **Proceed to the nearest Hospital Emergency room and call Dr. Gentile if any of these symptoms occur, which may be indicative of Pulmonary Embolism:**
(1) difficulty breathing, shortness of breath and/or fast breathing, (2) light-headedness, fainting, (3) fast pulse rate, (4) redness and/or swelling of your lower legs and/or ankles, (5) pain in the calf area of one or both of your lower legs not caused by trauma.
4. Any other symptoms, which you feel are abnormal.