

## Postoperative Instructions for Ventral and / or Incisional Hernia Repairs

### Description of Procedure

Ventral or Incisional Hernias are abdominal defects that occur in the anterior abdominal wall often times following previous surgeries. The patient will note a bulge to the anterior abdominal wall that can sometimes be relieved by placing pressure over the bulge or lying down. These hernias are typically fixed because of pain that results from having the intra-abdominal contents protrude through this abdominal wall defect and to avoid incarceration or strangulation that can occur if the intestine gets stuck within the abdominal wall defect.

### Post-Op Pain Control

Post operative pain varies significantly with this surgery depending on the length of the incision and the specific type of repair. Some patients will be admitted to the hospital for a day or 2 for post operative pain control, other patients with smaller hernias are sent home the day of surgery. Typically patients at home will require narcotic pain medication for at least 1 week and sometimes into the 2nd week. This medication can be supplemented by using anti-inflammatory medication such as Motrin® or Advil® taken up to 3 times daily; every 8 hours with food.

Common exam findings following Ventral or Incisional Hernia repair. The patient may notice bruising surrounding the hernia incision or around the laparoscopic incisions. Swelling of the abdomen is significant. Often times patients are not able to wear normal clothing for 1 to 2 weeks following surgery and an elastic waistband can be more comfortable.

### Common Things to Watch for After Surgery

- #1. Infection.** Although bruising is normal around the incisions, if the skin surrounding the incision becomes red, or inflamed, warm or associated with drainage of fluid or puss, the doctor should be notified immediately.
- #2. Inflammatory fluid.** Fluid may also accumulate underneath the incisions. Some patients will have a small plastic drain that will be placed at the time of surgery to drain this inflammatory fluid. A record should be kept of the amount of fluid that comes out of the drain every 24 hours. These drains will be removed at the office at your post-operative visit. For patients that do not have a drain, they may notice intense swelling just beneath the incision sometimes associated with drainage of small amount of clear fluid. If this occurs your doctor should be notified immediately. Very rarely the skin over the hernia incision may pull apart, again this is usually not a dangerous situation, but your doctor should be notified immediately and a sterile dressing should be placed over the wound until you are seen.
- #3. Constipation.** Narcotic pain medication commonly causes constipation in post operative patients. It is almost always appropriate to take a stool softener such as Colace® once in the morning and once at night in order to lessen the effects of constipation from the narcotics. Should you still be constipated after surgery a Ducolax® suppository, which can be obtained over the counter, can be used once in the morning and once at night as needed to produce a bowel movement. Some patients also find benefit from using milk of magnesia 30cc by mouth in the morning and at night until bowel movements resume. Should these over the counter medications be inadequate to produce normal bowel movements please call your doctor to receive additional instructions.

### Post Operative Restrictions

Your restrictions will depend on the size of the hernia repair. However, most patients appreciate 1 week off from work and everyday household responsibilities to rest and recuperate. After 1 week, activities such as office duties or routine household responsibilities are appropriate. During this period of time walking is encouraged, going up and down stairs or to the dinner table or to the bathroom are all acceptable activities. Strenuous activities such as heavy lifting or exercise should be avoided until 3 weeks following surgery. At this time the patient should allow their bodies to be their guide and as they advance their activities. Should they experience pain or discomfort the activity should be stopped or lessened. In some patients it will take up to 6 weeks following incisional or ventral hernia repair before normal, vigorous, strenuous activities can be accomplished.

### Follow up

You should call your surgeon's office anytime you have questions regarding your surgery. A routine follow up should be scheduled 7 to 10 days following surgery or discharge from the hospital. An additional appointment will be scheduled 6 weeks after surgery.