

Post-Operative Care For Abdominoplasty

SHORT TERM POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS:

- If you have excessive bleeding or pain, call the office immediately.
- You must have a family member or friend drive you home because you have been sedated for this procedure.
- **DRESSINGS:** We will place an elastic abdominal binder around your tummy after surgery to provide some gentle pressure, to give you stability, and to reduce swelling. If it feels too tight or causes pain, take it off. We do not want the binder to interfere with circulation to the skin, which could cause blistering or skin loss. You may also remove it temporarily for laundering. Many patients wear the binder for several weeks after surgery and some choose to wear it for several months. Let your own comfort and the amounts of swelling you experience guide you. We want you as comfortable as possible without swelling.
- **ACTIVITY:** Limit your activity. Take it easy and pamper yourself. Try to avoid any straining. You may go to the bathroom, sit, watch TV, etc. Do not do any housework or strenuous activities. We do not want you to bleed and cause any more swelling or bruising than is unavoidable. Tummy tucks are probably the most uncomfortable operations we perform. You will experience some pain for 10-20 days and will not feel like resuming sports or heavy exercise for at least 6 weeks. After the first 2 weeks, you may resume moderate walks for as long as tolerable.
- **ICE PACKS:** Ice pack can be used to help reduce swelling, bruising, and pain. Use crushed ice cubes in a zip-lock bag or a package of frozen peas. If the ice becomes too uncomfortable, discontinue its use.
- **DIET:** If you have any post-operative nausea, carbonated sodas, and dry crackers may settle the stomach. If nausea is severe, use the suppository. If you feel normal, start with liquids and bland foods, and if those are well tolerated, progress to a regular diet.
- **SMOKING:** Smoking reduces the blood flow to your skin. We advise you not to smoke at all during the first 10 days after surgery.
- **ALCOHOL:** Alcohol dilates the blood vessels and could increase the post-operative bleeding. Please do not drink until you have stopped taking the prescription pain pills, as the combination of pain medication and alcohol can be dangerous.
- **DRIVING:** Please do not drive for at least 2 days after the anesthesia or while taking the prescription pain medications.
- **POSITION:** Because an abdominoplasty involves removal of excessive abdominal skin and tightening of the abdominal muscles, you will experience some difficulty standing up straight for a week or two or even longer. During this period, you may find it more comfortable to place a pillow or two under your knees while in bed. The tightness will gradually disappear as you heal and progressively use your body muscles for activities of daily living. Please make no special attempts to stretch or pull the abdomen straight during the first 2-3 weeks of healing.
 - o ***** YOU MUST CHANGE YOUR POSITION AND WALK AROUND THE HOUSE EVERY FEW HOURS TO REDUCE THE DANGER OF BLOOD CLOTS.*****
- **DRAINS:** The Doctors will probably place two drains into the surgical areas at the time of surgery. These drains evacuate the fluid that accumulates after surgery and enable you to heal faster. When the drain is first put in place, the bulb at the end of each tube will be compressed to create gentle suction. As the fluid collects in the bulb, it will expand.
 - o **Drain Care:** Secure the bulb of the drain to your clothing or the abdominal binder with a safety pin. Whenever the bulb fills or expands 50% or more, empty the bulb by opening the plug at the top and pouring out the contents. Do not attempt to remove the bulb from the tubing. Squeeze the bulb to recompress it, and put the plug back into the hole at the top in order to maintain the vacuum. If the bulb fills rapidly after emptying it, or you need to empty it more than three times a day please call the office. The doctor will remove the drains in 5-10 days after surgery, when the fluid begins to turn a clear, straw color and/or the amount of drainage diminishes. You may shower the day after your drains are removed.
- **SUTURES:** The doctor will remove sutures around the belly button around 5-7 days after surgery and the remaining sutures that are under the skin in 14-28 days after surgery.
- **EXPOSURE TO SUNLIGHT:** We recommend that you protect your scars from the sun for a year after surgery. Even through a bathing suit, a good deal of sunlight can reach the skin and cause damage. Wear sunscreen with skin-protection factor (SPF) of at least 15 when out in sunny weather.

LONG TERM POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS:

- **ACTIVITY/SPORTS:** We want you to avoid straining or any aerobic activity for at least 3 weeks after surgery. This is to avoid bleeding, bruising, and swelling. Do not resume strenuous exercise for 4 to 6 weeks. The doctors will give you clearance to increase your activities according to the progress of your recovery. Avoid sit-ups for a period of six months.
- **SEXUAL ACTIVITY:** You may enjoy sexual activity as your body allows which is usually in 4 to 6 weeks.
- **TIGHTNESS:** Your abdomen will feel tight for a month or longer. If you have had a muscle repair, you will feel the tightness down the center of your tummy where the doctor has actually repaired your muscles. This hurts more than any other part of the procedure.
- **HEALING OF SENSORY NERVES:** Usually, the skin of the abdomen remains partially or completely numb for several months or longer. Tingling, burning, or shooting pains indicate regeneration of the small sensory nerves. This feeling will disappear with time and is not cause for alarm. It may take as long as 2 years for sensation in your abdomen to be restored completely.
- **FEELING OF FULLNESS:** You may pleasantly find that you feel full sooner than normal when you begin eating regular meals. Eat until you feel this sensation, then discontinue eating. You may find that you have to eat multiple smaller meals.

Please call the office if you have **any questions** or if we may be of assistance.

Please **call the office at 916-419-4588** if you develop a temperature or have any concerns that need immediate attention. **If the office is closed**, please dial Ext. 5 to be connected to Dr. Heir's cell phone.

You will need a follow up appointment with Dr. Heir in 1 week.
