

# Discharge Instructions for Total Abdominal Colectomy



A total abdominal colectomy is surgery to remove your colon. Your colon, also called the large intestine, is part of your bowel. A colectomy is done to remove disease, such as cancer, polyps, and inflammatory bowel disease, and to relieve the symptoms you have been having, such as bleeding, blockage, and pain.

## Activity

- Ask your friends and family to help with chores and errands while you recover.
- Walk on a regular basis. Start with short walks each day. Gradually increase the distance you walk and how often you walk.
- Don't lift anything heavier than 10 pounds for the first 6 weeks after your surgery.
- Don't drive for 2 weeks after surgery or as directed by your healthcare provider. Don't drive while you are taking prescription pain medicine.
- Ask your healthcare provider when you can expect to return to work. Most people are able to return to work within 4 to 6 weeks after surgery.

## Other home care

- Diarrhea or loose stools are common after surgery, and can last weeks to months. Call your surgeon if you have watery, or bloody diarrhea. This may be a sign of a bowel infection or other problem.
- Follow the diet prescribed for you in the hospital. Slowly add foods until you get back to your regular diet. If a certain type of food gives you stomach or bowel problems, stay away from it for a while.
- At first you may be on a low-fiber diet. After this, adding fiber can help with the diarrhea. Your healthcare provider may prescribe a medicine for the diarrhea as well if the diarrhea is severe.
- You may use pain medicine as directed by your provider. Discuss your best choice before leaving the hospital and at your post-op visit.
- Use nutritional supplements or shakes as directed by your healthcare provider.
- Drink at least 8 glasses of water every day, unless directed otherwise. It's very important to prevent dehydration, especially if you have a bag that collects stool (ostomy) or diarrhea.
- Take your medicines exactly as directed. Don't skip doses.
- Shower or bathe as directed by your healthcare provider. Gently wash your incision with soap and water and pat dry.
- Don't take tub baths until the staples in your incision have been removed, and your healthcare provider says it's OK.
- If you have an ostomy, you likely will have met with an ostomy nurse in the hospital. You may have more questions once you get home. Contact the ostomy nurse or your surgeon.

## Follow-up care

Make a follow-up appointment, or as advised.

## When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider right away if any of the following occur:

- Fever of 100.4°F ( 38°C) or higher, or as directed by your healthcare provider
- Chills
- Diarrhea that lasts more than 3 days
- Nausea and vomiting that won't go away
- Belly pain that gets worse or isn't relieved by pain medicine
- Belly swelling or pain that gets worse or won't go away
- Drainage or redness around your incision
- Bright red or dark black stools

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