

Discharge Instructions for Vaginal Hysterectomy



Vaginal hysterectomy is surgery to remove the uterus and often the cervix. It takes 4 to 6 weeks to recover from the procedure. Here's what you need to know about caring for yourself during this time. Follow these and any other directions you are given.

Two types of vaginal hysterectomy

Vaginal hysterectomy is done through an incision inside the vagina. In some cases, 2 to 3 small incisions are also made in the skin. Small tools are then put through the small incisions to assist the procedure. This is called laparoscopically assisted vaginal hysterectomy (LAVH). If a hysterectomy is done vaginally, the cervix is always removed as well.

Home care

- Plan to rest at home for 3 to 5 days after the surgery.
- Take all prescribed medicine exactly as directed.
- Continue the coughing and deep breathing exercises you learned in the hospital.
- If you had LAVH, you will have several small incisions on your belly. Keep the incisions clean and dry. Change bandages as directed.
- After LAVH, you may have pain in your shoulder. This is normal and due to gas used to expand your belly during the surgery. The pain may last up to 7 days.
- If you have stitches inside your vagina, they will absorb over time and don't need to be taken out.
- Use sanitary pads to absorb vaginal bleeding or discharge. Light bleeding is likely at first. You may have a brownish discharge for up to 6 weeks.
- Don't use tampons or douches. They can cause infection.
- Prevent constipation, which causes straining to pass stool. Eat fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain foods. Drink at least 8 glasses of fluid each day. If needed, ask your healthcare provider if you should use a stool softener.

Activity

Full recovery may take 4 to 6 weeks. This varies from woman to woman. Increase your activities a little bit each day. While you are recovering, be sure to:

- Not drive while you are taking opioid or other narcotic pain medicines
- Walk as often as you feel able. Walking prevents blood clots from forming. It also helps speed healing.
- Climb stairs slowly. If you get tired, pause every few steps.
- Not do sports or strenuous activity until your healthcare provider says it's OK
- Not lift anything heavier than 10 pounds for 4 to 6 weeks
- Ask others to help with chores and errands
- Bathe or shower according to your healthcare provider's directions

- Not have sex until your healthcare provider says it's OK
- Ask your healthcare provider when you can return to work

Follow-up care

You will visit the healthcare provider again to be sure you are healing well. Keep all follow-up appointments. Be sure to tell your healthcare provider if you have hot flashes, mood swings, or irritability. Medicine may help ease these symptoms.

Life after hysterectomy

This procedure removes your uterus. So you will no longer have menstrual periods. You won't be able to become pregnant. Also, you may not need Pap tests if your cervix was removed. Your healthcare provider can discuss these and other changes with you.

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
- Vaginal bleeding that is bright red or soaks more than 1 pad in 60 minutes
- Smelly or green-colored discharge from the vagina
- Shortness of breath or chest pain
- Nausea or vomiting that continues for more than 1 day or that make it impossible to eat or drink
- Inability to move the bowels for 3 days
- Loose or watery stools 2 or more times a day, or bloody stools
- Trouble urinating or burning during urination
- Severe pain or bloating in your belly (abdomen)
- Pain or swelling in your legs
- For LAVH, redness, swelling, drainage, or increasing pain at an incision site
- You feel abnormally depressed or sad after the surgery

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