

## Post-Surgery Instructions: Abdominal Etching

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Once your surgery is completed, you must follow all the instructions given to you in order to heal properly and have a good outcome.

The following instructions are your obligation. Use this as a checklist of progress as you heal. Included are normal post-surgical experiences and key health considerations that may be a cause of concern.

### Normal Post-Operative Symptoms for Abdominal Etching should be:

- **Tightness in the chest region and stiffness; Tingling, burning or intermittent shooting pain:** These are normal experiences as the skin, tissues and sensory nerves heal. Pain medication and muscle relaxants will help you cope with any discomfort. If you have drains, you may experience additional localized discomfort. **Consistent sharp pain should be reported to our office immediately.**
- **Skin firmness, hypersensitivity or lack of sensitivity:** This is normal and will gradually resolve over time.
- **Shiny skin or any itchy feeling:** Swelling can cause the skin in treated areas to appear shiny. As the healing process advances, you may also find a mild to severe itchy feeling. An antihistamine like Benadryl can help to alleviate severe, constant itchiness. **If the skin becomes red and hot to the touch, contact our office immediately.**
- **Asymmetry: both sides of your body heal differently:** One side of your body may look or feel quite different from the other in the days following surgery. This is normal.

### Call the office immediately if you experience any of the following

- **A high fever, (over 101°) severe nausea and vomiting, continued dizziness or incoherent behavior, such as hallucinations.**
- **Any pain that cannot be controlled by your pain medication.**
- **Bright red skin that is hot to the touch.**
- **Excessive bleeding or fluid seeping from the nose or mouth.**
- **A severely misshapen appearance, excessive bruising or fluid retention that is localized to the side of your face or nose.**

### Day of surgery instructions

Whether you are released after surgery or after an overnight stay in a recovery center or hospital, you will only be released to the care of a responsible adult. All of these instructions must be clear to the adult who will monitor your health and support you around the clock in the first 24 hours following surgery.

- **Rest, but not bed rest.** While rest is important in the early stages of healing, equally important is that you are ambulatory, meaning that you are walking under your own strength. Spend 10 minutes every 2 hours engaged in light walking indoors as you recover.
- **Recline with your head and chest slightly elevated above your lower body.**
- **Good nutrition:** fluids are critical following surgery. Stick to non-carbonated, non-alcoholic, caffeine-free and green tea-free beverages including fruit juices and water, milk and yogurt drinks. You must consume at least 8 ounces of fluid every 2 hours. Stick with soft, bland, nutritious food for the first 24 hours.
- **Take all medication, exactly as prescribed.**
- **Change your incision dressings.** Your incisions will seep fluid and some blood for a short time after surgery. Keep dressings clean and dry. A cotton swab with peroxide is appropriate for cleansing incisions. Do not remove any steri-strips over your stitches. Apply anti-bacterial ointment over the steri-strips, and then apply 4x4 gauze pads over your incisions. **Replace any compression garments over the gauze** . If you have a drain placed in your incisions, carefully follow the instructions for drain care and record drained fluid on the **Drain Care Instructions and Log**.
- **Wear your compression garment or elastic wraps around the clock.** Follow the instructions specifically, and only remove any compression to cleanse your incision or to empty any drains.
- **Do not smoke.** Smoking can greatly impair your safety prior to surgery and your ability to heal following surgery. You must not smoke.
- **Relax.** Do not engage in any stressful activities. Do not lift your hands over your head. Do not lift anything heavier than a paperback book. Take care of no one, and let others tend to you.

## Two To Seven Days Following Surgery

During this time you will progress with each day that passes. Ease into your daily activities. You will receive clearance to begin driving or return to work at your post-operative visit..

- **Continue to cleanse wounds as directed; you may shower.** Take a warm, not hot shower. Do not take a bath. Limit your shower to 10 minutes. Avoid getting your incisions wet. Do not remove any steri-strips. Do not rub your incisions. Apply a fragrance free moisturizer to the surrounding skin, however not on your incisions.
- **Take antibiotic medications and supplements as directed.** Take pain medication and muscle relaxants only as needed. You may wish to switch from prescriptive pain medication to acetaminophen or ibuprofen.
- **Continue your breast massage. Wear your bra around the clock.**
- **Do not resume any exercise other than regular walking.** Walking is essential every day to prevent the formation of blood clots.
- **No sun exposure.** If you plan to go outdoors for any reason, wear protective clothing. Avoid any direct sun exposure.
- **Maintain a healthy diet. Do not smoke. Do not consume alcohol.**

## One To Four Weeks Following Surgery

As you resume your normal daily activities, you must continue proper care and healing.

- **Continue your wound care as directed.**
- **Refrain from weight-bearing or abdominal crunching exercises.** Continue walking. A daily, brisk 20-minute walk is recommended.
- **Do not smoke.** While incisions may have sealed, smoking deprives your body of necessary oxygen that can result in poorly healed, wide, raised scars.
- **Continue to wear your compression garment as directed.** This is essential for your skin to conform to new contours. If your skin does not conform, revision procedures to reduce excess skin may be recommended.
- **Practice good sun protection.** Do not expose your breasts to direct sunlight. If you are outdoors, apply at least an SPF 30 to the chest area at least 30 minutes prior to sun exposure. Your chest region and breast skin are highly susceptible to sunburn or the formation of irregular, darkened pigmentation.

### **Six weeks following surgery**

Healing will progress and your breasts will settle into a more final shape and position.

- **You may ease into your regular fitness routine.** However realize that your upper body may require some time to return to previous strength.
- **Discomfort or tightness and tingling will resolve.**
- **No need to resume smoking.** You have now gone 10 weeks (4 weeks prior to surgery and 6 weeks following) without a cigarette. For your long-term health, there is no need to resume smoking.

### **Your first year**

- **Continue healthy nutrition, fitness and sun protection.**
- **Your scars will continue to refine.** If they become raised, red or thickened, or appear to widen, contact our office. Early intervention is important to achieving well-healed scars. Scars are generally refined to fine incision lines one year after surgery.
- **A one-year post surgery follow-up is recommended.** However, you may call our office at any time with your concerns or for needed follow-up

**Your body will change with age.** The appearance of your body will change too. Although procedure outcomes are generally permanent, any significant weight gain or loss, pregnancy, and normal influences of aging can cause changes to your appearance. You may wish to undergo revision surgery at a later date to help maintain your appearance throughout life. Contact our office with any of your questions or concerns, at any time.