

Women's Health Services of Central Virginia

Helpful Hints Before Surgery

For major surgery, the usual length of time to be out of work, or unable to do the major chores around the home, will be six weeks. You will not be able to drive for at least 2 weeks, if there are no complications. (Your reaction time must be rapid and you should be able to press the brake quickly). Someone will need to be available to take you to the doctor if it is necessary, grocery shop, or do other errands. Someone else will need to do major cleaning and household chores (vacuuming, changing linens, doing laundry, caring for and walking pets), for several weeks. You will stir around at home - not stay in bed, but not do your usual activity or housework. Recovery should be gradual. It is best not to go to public places for at least two weeks. You will be intensely tired for several weeks, especially after major surgery. Regaining full energy may take up to a year.

Unless otherwise informed by your physician, tub baths are not allowed for two weeks. Showers and washing hair are all right. You will also need some pads or pantliners for a couple of weeks. Most women have bleeding or spotting for 1-2 weeks (or longer) with major gyn surgery. You will be given disposable underwear (which will wash out nicely for a few weeks - bring it home with you), and a perineal care bottle (to rinse the perineal area of your body as long as you are having any discharge), and some light pads. You may want to have an extra box of thin pads in case discharge or bleeding lasts longer than a few days.

Return of bowel function maybe slow since you will not be able to exercise as usual. Very mild exercises as advised by your physician, may begin after three weeks. Long distance walking is usually best left for 4 weeks. Please wait for a release from the physician before returning to long distance walking or heavy/aerobic exercise.

A stool softener (Colace, Metamucil, Citrucel, etc.) would be good to have on hand to use when you get home to soften stool. Mylicon or Gas X as directed may also help. Water is really best to drink, along with your other liquids. If you don't care for your home water, buy bottled water instead. Fruit juices (especially warm prune juice) and fresh fruits, salads and high fiber foods (oatmeal, bran, whole wheat, vegetables) and a well-balanced diet will help your recovery and will help you feel better faster. Warm liquids such as hot tea work very well. Voiding may also take a little time to resume normal volume, especially if bladder surgery has been involved.

Vitamins should be left until good bowel function returns. Resume regular medications as instructed by the physician.

Watch for fever. Have a thermometer to take your temperature if necessary. If your ovaries were removed, some hot flashes are likely. Sometimes surgery is very emotional. If you are extremely tired, you will be more emotional. It is not unusual to have "blue days", especially after a hysterectomy. Fresh air, such as sitting outside or a short ride in the care with someone else driving would be helpful

Sexual Activity may be resumed after six weeks if there are no complications.

You will receive an appointment to return to the physician for evaluation before you resume normal activities.