

POST-OPERATIVE GUIDELINES FOR LAPAROSCOPIC COLON SURGERY:

1. You should be able to eat or drink without restrictions, unless you are on a restricted diet for other reasons. It is okay to drink alcohol once you are no longer taking prescription pain medicine.
2. Even the most minor surgical procedure is stressful to the body. You may feel quite tired even for several weeks after the operation. This is **NORMAL** and not a sign of trouble. If you get tired during the day, try to take a rest or a nap.
3. Take scheduled non-narcotic pain medication for 2-3 days unless you are instructed otherwise. ***If there is no contraindication or documented allergy, the usually recommended schedule is 2 extra strength Tylenol tablets alternating with 3-4 ibuprofen tablets (600-800 MG) every 3 hours, always with a piece of toast or crackers. If you still experience severe pain, take the prescription narcotic pain medication, as needed and directed.*** Remember, narcotic pain medication should only be taken as needed for severe pain and if you already taken the scheduled non-narcotic pain medications. Pressure or discomfort does not warrant the use of narcotics. Narcotics may have serious side effects (constipation, dizziness, urinary retention, nausea, vomiting), may prolong your recovery and you are not allowed to drive if you take them.
4. You may drive again as soon as you feel safe enough to make a short stop with no hesitation and if you are not taking prescription pain medicine. Always wear a seat belt when driving or riding in a car.
5. There are usually 3-4 small incisions covered by skin glue or a clear dressing on the abdomen and a larger incision in the lower abdomen. Do not try to remove the skin glue – it will come off over weeks. It is okay to take a shower at home unless instructed otherwise. Do not take a bath or go swimming for 7 days. If you notice any worsening redness, pain, bulging or drainage from any incision call us immediately.
6. Irregular bowel movement is a frequent problem post-operatively, especially if you are taking any narcotic pain medication. Unless you experience diarrhea, taking a stool softener after leaving the hospital can greatly improve pain control and prevent constipation. Our recommended agent is Senokot S (over the counter), 2 tablets twice a day starting on the night of the surgery for a week. If you do not have a bowel movement after one or two days at home, you may take a gentle laxative, either Milk of Magnesia or prune juice. If you begin to have severe pain, call us. If you have loose bowel movements, make sure you drink plenty of fluids to replete the fluid loss.
7. There are no restrictions on your activity within reason. Walking is good exercise after your operation and will build up your strength. You are the best judge of what you can and cannot do. **Continue to wear the abdominal binder when you are out of bed for 4-6 weeks following the surgery.** Place it over a T-shirt to avoid skin irritation. If something causes severe pain or discomfort, stop immediately. In general, avoid lifting objects over 5-10 lb for 7-10 days. Running, jumping or heavy exercise should be avoided for at least 2-3 weeks. Otherwise, feel free to do what you wish.
8. If you haven't already been given a follow-up appointment, call my office upon discharge for an appointment in 2 weeks. Feel free to call us at any time should you have a problem or questions.
9. You may return to work without restrictions as soon as you feel able, usually 7 to 10 days after the surgery.
10. Avoid direct sunlight to the incisions for about a year if you are concerned about the cosmetic appearance. Sun tanning of the incisions may cause more permanent darkening of your scar.
11. If you believe that you run out of pain medication within 12 hours, please call in normal work hours (9 am to 4 pm) for a refill. This way we can guarantee timely refill of your prescription.