

MARC MANDEL, M.D., F.A.C.S.

GENERAL AND ONCOLOGIC SURGERY OF THE BREAST AND ABDOMEN

[Home](#)

[Dr. Mandel](#)

[Locations & Directions](#)

[Patient Information](#)

Post-Operative Care Instructions for Laparoscopic Cholecystectomy

Congratulations! You have just had a laparoscopic cholecystectomy. Please follow my instructions to help minimize pain and length of recovery. Call the office as soon as possible for a post-operative appointment.

WOUND CARE:

- Please note that you have clear plastic dressings over your wounds. These dressings are waterproof, but allows air to get to the wound to facilitate healing. You may also have skin glue as your dressing, in which case the instructions are still somewhat similar.
- You may notice some blood underneath the dressings. This is quite common and, unless it is a large amount, is not cause for concern. If there is a bubble of blood under the plastic dressing, I would advise making a tiny opening with the tip of scissors or a pin and gently squeeze the blood out into a gauze pad or tissue. I would then just continue to allow the dressing to stay intact. If the blood is leaking out from under the dressing, I would recommend getting some sterile gauze and tape and placing it over the dressing for the first twenty-four to forty-eight hours until the leakage of blood stops. I would still not recommend removing the dressing. If you feel you need to remove the dressing, please call the office.
- 95% of the time the sutures are not visible and are self-absorbing. You may see little white tapes over the incision, which help to hold the wound together. These may become stained with blood and, again, that is nothing to worry about.
- Starting around the second or third day, you may begin to notice blood under the skin or a "black-and-blue mark." This can be extensive and is generally not a cause for concern and it will all be re-absorbed over a period of a week or two.
- You may also notice swelling in the area of the wound and this generally begins to appear on the second or third day and peaks around the fifth day. Often times this will be resorbed over a period of two or three weeks.
- If you notice swelling around the umbilical wound, which appears to worsen and get red and tender, this may indicate that you have a wound infection. If this is the case, please call the office.

PAIN CONTROL:

- In general your pain should improve a little each day following the second day of surgery. If it appears to worsen following the second day of surgery and it is not due to constipation, please give the office a call.
- The umbilical wound tends to be a little more sore than the other wounds for a period of time. This is not unusual.
- You may notice pain in your shoulders and your upper abdomen and it may almost feel as if you are having a gallbladder attack. This is secondary to the gas that was utilized to expand your abdominal cavity during the surgery. This may take as long as seven to ten days to resolve. Again, it is important to realize that this should be getting a little better each day, rather than a little bit worse.
- You have most likely been given a prescription for pain medication. Most people find that they do not require it for more than the first two or three days, at which time it is fine to switch to Tylenol or Ibuprofen.

ACTIVITY:

- For the first two days, only walking is permitted. You may climb stairs as necessary and this will not bring harm to

your wounds, however, it may cause excessive soreness. Following the first two days, you may begin walking or climbing stairs more. You may lift light objects however heavy lifting is not permitted for the first two to three weeks. After two to three weeks, you may begin light exercise. If you have a work out regime, I would recommend using 50% of the weight you have been using pre-operatively. You should target one month at a time when you are exercising to the extent that you were prior to surgery.

- You may engage in sexual activity after 24-hours. Obviously adjustments may need to be made for comfort.
- You may shower starting on post-operative day one, unless otherwise instructed. You may not bathe for one week. I do not want the wound to be soaked. You may, however, stand with your back to the shower and let water gently run over the waterproof dressing.

DIET:

- Water is your friend. You should drink approximately eight glasses of water a day. This will make you feel better and keep your bowel movements nice and soft.
- You should maintain a low-fat diet for the first one to two weeks. or until your bowel movements are totally normal. I would suggest staying away from foods which make you gassy or bloated, or from foods which tend to constipate you, such as rice or potatoes.

BOWEL MOVEMENTS:

- Approximately 10-15% of patients will experience urgency to move their bowels following meals. This tends to last for only one to three weeks and is always self-limiting. If this appears to be going on longer or is severe, please call the office.
- If you have not moved your bowels in forty-eight to seventy-two hours after surgery, I recommend taking 45cc of Milk of Magnesia, either in the morning or prior to bed. Remember, it takes eight hours for the Milk of Magnesia to work, so you do not want to take it so that the time sequence would fall in the middle of the night. When you strain to move your bowels, press firmly against the incision. This will alleviate some of the pain, which comes with pushing out bowel movements.

YOU SHOULD CALL ME IF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING OCCUR:

1. Persistent diarrhea or vomiting.
2. Temperature greater than 101 for more than 24-hours.
3. Excessive bleeding, beyond that which was described in the first section.
4. No bowel movement 24-hours after taking Milk of Magnesia.
5. If your pain is increasing steadily over a period of several days rather than slowly decreasing, I would recommend that you give me a call.
6. If your urine becomes dark yellow and you notice that your skin or your eye whites start becoming yellow.

IF YOU BELIEVE THAT YOU ARE HAVING A HEART ATTACK OR OTHER EMERGENT PROBLEM, PLEASE CALL 9-1-1 FIRST TO HAVE AN AMBULANCE BRING YOU TO THE HOSPITAL, THEN CONTACT THE OFFICE TO LET ME KNOW WHAT IS GOING ON.

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[Home](#)

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[Locations & Directions](#)

[Patient Information](#)

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