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GENERAL AND ONCOLOGIC SURGERY OF THE BREAST AND ABDOMEN

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Post-Operative Care Instructions for Open Wounds which require packing

1. Your wound was left opened because an Infection was present at the time of your surgery. When wounds are closed in the presence of an infection, infection re-occurs and goes on to cause wound-healing problems.
2. The wound may initially be hypersensitive during the packing process and you may need to take pain medication a half an hour before the packing change is done. After three or four days, the wound becomes desensitized and packing and unpacking should not be bothersome to any large degree.
3. The principal of a packed wound is that it closes from the bottom up and, therefore, it is important that when you pack the wound, you pack to the full depth of the opening.
4. Packing changes should be done two or three times a day, as discussed with me. There are various types of packing used, and I will discuss with you the packing that is best for your wound.
5. Remember, these wounds are not sterile, but simply clean. It is permissible to shower into these wounds and, in fact, it is quite healthy for them. I would recommend having a daily routine of unpacking your wound, taking a shower, and re-packing the wound. You should then cover the packed wound with dry gauze and tape the dry gauze into place.
6. If the wound is in the groin or anal-rectal area, a feminine napkin may be utilized instead of the overlying dry gauze to prevent tape from being applied to the skin.
7. Often the wound will ooze a small amount of blood during the changing process and this is perfectly normal and nothing to worry about. If excessive bleeding occurs, the wound should be packed tightly and pressured held and the office notified.
8. You may note a small amount of green discharge on the packing when it is removed. This is normal and is the purpose of the packing. This is to remove the infected material from the wound as it is unpacked.
9. Depending on the type of wound and the location, you may be packing with a dry packing, with a packing dampened with saline, or with a packing dampened with a prescription liquid.
10. Don't be discouraged! Wounds often look as if they are not closing and then suddenly seem to contract by magic.
11. If your wound becomes difficult to manage, I may refer you to our wound care center. I also may elect to have a "wound-vac" placed.

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.