



Panniculectomy

Post Operative Instructions

What to do:

- Keep dressing clean, dry, and intact for 2-3 days following surgery. In most cases, the dressing should then be changed (see #2 below). If you have drains in place, you should generally not shower until they are removed (see #3 below). If the drains have been removed, you may begin to shower. The surgical area can be washed lightly with soap and water - do not soak incisions for long periods of time until well-healed.
- To change dressing, open abdominal binder (elastic garment around abdomen). Replace soiled dressings with fresh gauze dressings. The gauze can subsequently be changed every 2-3 days, usually for the first 2 weeks after surgery. You may or may not be directed by your provider to apply Xeroform gauze (yellow, medicated gauze) to the incisions and umbilicus. This is usually done for about one week after surgery. The abdominal binder should be worn for approximately 4 weeks following surgery.
- Drains are usually required for this type of surgery. These will usually be removed between 1-2 weeks after surgery. As noted above, you should avoid showering while the drains are still in. In this case, you may sponge bath. Wash incisions (and around the drains) lightly with soap and water. Place a piece of gauze around the drain sites to prevent soilage of clothing. Safety pins can be helpful in securing drains to abdominal binder. For other drain instructions, see Drain Care Instruction in the General Information.
- You should maintain your body in a position of flexion at the hips for the first 10 days or so after surgery. This helps the incision to heal properly by relieving tension. While lying down, assume a "beach chair" position - place pillows under the knees and trunk or use a recliner. While standing or walking, bend slightly at the waist.
- In some cases, antibiotics may be prescribed for use while drains are in place.
- Avoid aspirin-containing products or anti-inflammatory medications (Motrin, Aleve, etc.) for 2-3 days after surgery, as these may increase the risk of bleeding immediately after surgery. Tylenol is safe immediately after surgery and may be alternated with (or used in place of) prescribed pain medication.
- It is not generally necessary, in the immediate postoperative period, to apply any ointments or topical compounds to the incisions; doing so can inhibit normal healing. You may discuss scar treatments with your provider – these can usually be initiated at about 2 wks after surgery.

- It is usually a good idea to avoid strenuous activity or exercise for the first 7-10 days after surgery. Walking and light activities are recommended instead. Exercise can usually be gradually initiated beginning 2-4 weeks after surgery. a. If an abdominal hernia was repaired at the time of the panniculectomy, heavy lifting (over 10 lbs. - the approximate weight of a gallon of milk) should be avoided until 6 weeks after surgery.
- Driving should be avoided if you are taking narcotic pain medications or if there is still significant pain from the surgery. Driving while either of these conditions are present could result in an unsafe driving situation.

What to look for / Troubleshooting:

- Signs of infection: increasing redness, pain, warmth, swelling, or purulent drainage at the surgical site. Additionally, fevers and chills can be signs of infection. Normal surgical pain and swelling should begin to gradually decrease 2-3 days after surgery. If you suspect infection at the surgical site, contact your provider as soon as possible to determine the appropriate treatment course.
- Signs of bleeding: sudden increased swelling / mass-effect at the surgical site, drainage of blood from the wound, or severe bruising around the surgical site. Sudden onset (or increase) in pain can be a sign of bleeding as well. Drainage of a small or moderate amount of blood-tinged fluid, from the incisions or drain sites, is not uncommon and is usually not indicative of active bleeding. If there appears to be active bleeding, direct pressure on the site can be helpful. If you suspect significant bleeding following surgery, contact your provider to determine appropriate treatment.
- Wound healing problems can manifest as separation of the skin edges or an open wound at the surgical site. This can be caused by a variety of factors and is usually a problem that can be managed by dressing changes and wound care. Keep the area clean and place a gauze dressing. Contact your provider to discuss need for further evaluation and treatment recommendations.

If any problems arise or if you have any questions, please call (408) 851-2000.