Home Care after a Bowel Resection

The diseased part of the large (colon) or small bowel is removed. The two healthy ends are sewn or stapled back together and the incision is closed.

Incision Care

- Look at your incision daily. A normal wound is puffy, pink, may have a clear pink drainage, may be numb and bruised and will form scabs. It is normal for the incision to be pink near the staple. Signs of infection are:
  - Wound is more red or warm to touch each day
  - Red or pink color spreads beyond the incision site
  - Pus-like drainage
  - Excess swelling or bleeding
  - Temperature (by mouth) more than 100.4°F for 2 readings, 4 hours apart
  - Pain not controlled by pain pills

- When you can get your wound wet, you may shower and wash it with a mild soap and water. Pat it dry. Do not soak in a bathtub, hot tub or swim until incision is healed, this may be at least 2 weeks. Do not use lotion, powder or ointment on your wound unless ordered by your doctor.

- If you have tape strips on your wound, allow them to fall off on their own. If they begin to fray, you may trim them with a scissors.

- You do not need to wear a dressing on your wound unless it rubs on your clothes, drains or it is in a skin fold. If you wear a dressing change it at least everyday and more often if it gets wet.

- It is normal to have a healing ridge over your incision.

Bowel Movements

For 6 weeks after surgery you will have an increased number of bowel movements per day. They will be loose, this is normal. As your body heals and your diet has more fiber you will have fewer, more formed bowel movements. If a section of your large bowel is removed, you may have problems with constipation if you are taking pain pills and adding more fiber to your diet. It is important to also add more fluid to your diet to help prevent these problems. Be sure to drink 8-10 eight ounce glasses of fluid (without caffeine it in) every day.

Pain

It is normal to have some pain in the surgical area. Pain pills will be ordered for you.
Activity

- Lifting Restrictions:
  - For open surgery: Do not lift more than 10 pounds for 6 weeks.
  - For laparoscopic surgery: Do not lift more than 10 pounds for 3 weeks, then no more than 20 pounds until 6 weeks after surgery.
- No strenuous activity until your doctor says it is okay. Walking is fine and is an important part of your recovery.
- Check with your doctor before going back to work.
- Resume sex when you feel ready, this may not be for 2 to 3 weeks.
- Ask your doctor when you may drive. If you are taking narcotic pain pills you may not drive.
- It may take 2-3 months for you to feel like yourself again.

Low Residue Diet

You will be on a low fiber and residue diet for 2 weeks after surgery. At your first post op follow-up appointment we will talk with you about your diet and when to start a general diet.

See HFFY 381 Low Fiber and Residue Diet.

When to Call the Doctor

- Incision is more red or warm to touch
- Pus-like drainage
- Excess swelling or bleeding
- Temperature (by mouth) above 100.4º F for 2 readings taken 4 hours apart.
- Pain not controlled with pain pills
- Severe abdominal pain
- Bloating
- Nausea or vomiting
- Constipation

Phone Numbers

Digestive Health Center: (608) 890-5010  Monday – Friday, 8am – 5pm

After hours, weekends or holidays this number will be answered by the paging operator.
Ask for the doctor on call for Dr. __________________. Leave your name and phone number with area code. The doctor will call you back.

If you live out of the area, call (855) 342-9900.