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After Abdominoplasty Surgery

You should be up walking with assistance on the evening of surgery and as much as possible daily thereafter. Try to ambulate each hour while awake. Do not spend hours at a time lying or sitting and avoid crossing legs at all times. These practices will minimize the chance of developing blood clots in the legs (deep venous thrombosis or DVT), a potentially very serious condition.

If you have had a complete abdominoplasty you should not stand up straight for the first week. Instead, bend over slightly in order to minimize the pull on the incision. When resting you should keep your knees bent and back up.

Continue to take the Arnica and Bromelain for two weeks. Do not take drugs on your “Medications to Avoid” list for two weeks. Remember not to smoke at all for at least three weeks although abstaining for six weeks is optimal for proper wound healing. Begin taking your antibiotic when you get home from surgery and continue as directed for one week. Take your prescription pain medication every four to six hours as needed but switch to Tylenol as soon as possible. Constipation can occur after surgery due in part to narcotic pain medications. Increase your intake of water, fruits, and fiber to help prevent this. Milk of Magnesia or Colace (both available at pharmacies over the counter) are often helpful if constipation persists. Substituting Tylenol (acetaminophen) for your prescription pain medication will also help prevent constipation.

Plastic drains are usually placed at the conclusion of the surgery to help draw off fluid normally produced by the body in response to surgery. The recovery room nurse will instruct you and give you detailed written instructions on how to care for the drains. We will give you an appointment for drain removal before you go home. This is typically one week after surgery. Drain output should be recorded on the drain output instruction sheet that will be given to you before discharge.

Postoperative swelling will begin to subside after one week but expect your clothes to feel tight for up to two months. Most of the bruising resolves within two weeks. It is normal for the abdominal skin to be numb after surgery. This will last for many months in the case of complete abdominoplasty. Most of the numbness eventually resolves. The surgical incisions are usually thin at first, become somewhat thicker and red for up to six months, and then begin to fade. It takes at least one year before final scar quality is established, and sometimes longer. Placing vitamin E or any other substance on the incisions has not been proven to be beneficial.

Gauze dressings will be placed at the conclusion of surgery and should remain in place

for forty-eight hours. At that time you may shower if you wish. Remove all gauze dressings from the abdomen first. You may take a bath after three weeks provided all incisions are completely healed. Flesh-colored tape or “steri-strips” placed on the incisions should be left on for two weeks. They can get wet in the shower. If they fall off early they do not need to be replaced. After showering gently dry the abdomen without rubbing. Do not use any creams, moisturizers, or powder on the skin for the first two weeks. You do not need to replace the gauze dressings.

Driving, flying, and return to sedentary work are permitted after two weeks. You should not drive until you can forcefully step on the brake pedal without experiencing discomfort in the abdomen. You may sleep on your side after one week as long as you have an abdominal binder on. Do not lie on your stomach for at least three months. Avoid strenuous efforts such as opening heavy doors or lifting heavy objects during the first two weeks. Do not lift anything heavier than five to ten pounds for two weeks. Raising your arms above your head must be done carefully for the first two weeks after surgery. Sexual relations should also be deferred for two weeks.

After two weeks you may gradually resume light exercise. Walking or an exercise bike is ideal. Light weight lifting for the lower body or arms (biceps and triceps only) is also permitted after two weeks. Golf, tennis, jogging, yoga, pilates, and vigorous sports should be avoided for a minimum of six weeks. Lifting weights more than five to ten pounds should be avoided for at least two months. It is not necessary to perform sit-ups in order to maintain abdominal tone after surgery.

Private Duty Nurses

You are required to have a private duty nurse for at least the first night following your surgery to provide personalized postoperative care. The nurses that we use are registered nurses who have been hand selected by Dr. Hidalgo. They are independent contractors and charge a separate fee for their services, (\$75 an hour). The private duty nurse will work a minimum of an eight hour shift. Your nurse will monitor your surgical site, ensure proper positioning and assist you with your medications and other needs.

Your private duty nurse will meet you at the office when you are ready to leave to escort you to your home or hotel. Plans for transportation should be made prior to surgery (e.g., car service, family car, or taxi). If you choose to take a taxi (most patients find this easiest), we will find one for you. You must stay in Manhattan for at least the first night following your surgery. If you plan to recuperate outside of Manhattan after the first night and you still have a private duty nurse, you must provide car transportation (car service, family car or taxi) to and from the city for the nurse. Traveling time is an additional one hour fee. Please be aware that private duty nurse arrangements need to be made well in advance of your surgical date. We ask that you give 48 hours notice if any changes need to be made in scheduling. You may discuss scheduling with one of our office nurses during your preoperative appointment.