

POST-PROSTATECTOMY PATIENT INSTRUCTION GUIDE

The instructions that follow are intended to help you recover from your surgery as quickly as possible and to answer the questions most commonly asked by our patients at this time.

1. **When you go home from the hospital** you will be going home with a catheter in your bladder. The catheter is there to allow the free flow of urine through the new connection between your bladder and urethra. The catheter will be removed in the office three weeks from the day of your surgery. Please use the large bedtime drainage bag both during the day and at night. The smaller leg bag should be used only when you leave the house.

You are encouraged to eat well and to remain well hydrated with liquids. Let your thirst be your guide in that regard.

It is important to avoid becoming constipated. Following surgery, your rectum must be protected from unusual pressure and stress for at least three months. You may take Milk of Magnesia and Mineral Oil for constipation. **Do not use enemas or suppositories** as they may injure the rectal tissue.

It is preferable for you to sit with your legs up on a footstool or in a recliner. This position provides leg support for your body in the area of the surgery. Also, by elevating your legs you will promote good venous return and prevent the formation of clots.

2. **Activity level** When you leave the hospital you **may not lift anything that weighs more than 10 pounds** for a period of 4-6 weeks. This reason for this restriction is:
 - a. To prevent a hernia within your incision. For at least 6 weeks your incision is held together with sutures. After that time, your body will have formed strong scar tissue to promote healing.
 - b. Any vigorous activity could seriously interfere with the new connection between your bladder and your urethra. This could cause problems with urinary control in the long term.

AFTER the initial 4-6 week period, you may return to your normal lifestyle with moderation, including driving your car.

3. **Post-operative visit #1** This is the day the doctor will remove your staples providing the healing is sufficient enough. This visit will be 7-10 days from the day of your surgery.
4. **Post-operative visit #2** This visit will be 2-3 weeks from the day of your surgery. This is the day you will have your catheter removed. You will need to wear some type of underpad while you are regaining control of your bladder function. Please feel free to ask for information regarding the types of undergarments available and where they can be most conveniently purchased. **Depends** makes an excellent product and CVS Pharmacy also carries their own brand of the same product at a reduction to you.

5. **Urinary Control** Problems with urinary control are common after the removal of the catheter. **YOU MUST BE VERY PATIENT!!!!** It is important that you avoid drinking excessive amounts of fluids and that you limit your alcohol and caffeine intake. Instructions will be given to you for pelvic floor muscle exercises. These exercises are called Kegel exercises and should be practiced diligently after your initial recovery period. **DO NOT USE THESE EXERCISES UNTIL INSTRUCTED TO DO SO** as they may strain the surgical site. You will begin to notice some control while you are lying down in bed, followed by some episodes of dryness while standing or walking. The last area of control to return is during the change in position from sitting to standing. It is important for you to understand that **TIME** is the greatest factor in the return of continence. As you progress, we may discuss with you the other methods to help in your recovery.

6. **Erectile function** The return of sexual function also takes time and depends to a great extent upon the age of the patient, the extent of the surgery and the desires of both the patient and his partner. We expect your erections to return gradually and to improve over a period of months, up to even a couple of years after surgery. The most effective stimulus will be tactile sensation. You are encouraged to engage in sexual activity and should not worry about hurting yourself in the process. We suggest a lubricant such as Surgilube or K-Y Jelly to assist with vaginal intercourse. Do not worry about your performance. It is more important that you practice. Remember that you have no ejaculation of semen because your prostate and seminal vesicles were removed during surgery. However, you can have an orgasm even if you do not have an erection. We have other options we can offer you if, over time, you do not regain your erectile function.

7. **Other concerns** You are recovering from major surgery. We expect that you will have questions in any one of a number of areas as you return to wellness. Please feel free to call the office at any time for advice. We are always available to talk to you. If you need medical attention, Dr. Zamstein will be notified immediately. Our telephone answering service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

We expect to see you in the office every 3 months for the first year following your surgery for a check-up. In the second post-operative year we will see you every 6 months and then once a year thereafter. Your regularly scheduled office visits will include a digital rectal examination and a blood test. If you need to be seen more frequently, the doctor will tell you.

We want you to know that we are giving you the best care possible. We care about you as an individual as well as our patient. We expect you to have an excellent recovery!