

## **Bowel Resection: Patient Discharge Instructions**

The following provides helpful information assist in your recovery from bowel resection surgery. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to ask your doctor or nurse.

*Gradually  
increase your  
activity.  
Rest if you  
get tired.  
Try to get a  
good night's  
sleep.*

### **What to Expect**

It may take 1 to 3 months to fully recover from your surgery. You will gradually feel stronger and become more active. Your doctor will advise you on returning to work.

### **General Guidelines**

Gradually increase your activity. Rest if you get tired. Try to get a good night's sleep. Taking pain medicine at bedtime may be helpful if it is difficult to get in a comfortable sleeping position.

Do not lift anything heavier than \_\_\_\_ lbs. Heavy lifting places a strain on your incision.

### **Diet**

It is normal to lose some weight after bowel surgery. Some people lose 10 lbs. or more. Soon it will level off and slowly you will start to regain some of the weight you lost. Do not be discouraged. Your body burns up a lot of extra calories as it heals.

Follow any diet instructions until your first doctor's visit.

Remember to chew your food well. Eat slowly to aid in digestion.

### **Alcohol**

If you are taking narcotic pain medication or sleeping medication, do not drink any alcohol.

Check with your doctor about whether you can drink alcohol.

## **Driving**

Your doctor will let you know when you can resume driving. Do not drive after taking narcotic medicine or sleeping pills.

## **Showering**

You may shower or bathe as long as directed by your doctor. Let warm, soapy water run over the incision and carefully pat it dry.

## **Incision and Muscle Aches and Pains**

You may note discomfort from the incision and muscle aches. Getting up and moving about can ease some of the discomfort. Brace your incision with a pillow when coughing or sneezing. If you have a rectal incision, sitting on a pillow may help.

Keep your incision clean and dry. If you wish, you may cover it with a loose piece of sterile gauze. This will reduce any irritation from the waistband of your clothing.

You may have small Steri-Strips™ (little white pieces of tape) on your incision. Do not remove these strips. These offer extra support while your incision heals. They will slowly curl up and fall off or your surgeon may remove them at your visit.

## **Sexual Activity**

Many people have questions about resuming sexual activity after surgery. If you feel good and are well rested, sexual activity may be resumed. Avoid positions that strain the incision site.

## **When to Call the Doctor**

Inspect your incision daily for signs of infection. Contact your surgeon if you note any of the following:

- Temperature over 101° F
- Drainage or fluid from the incision that may be foul-smelling
- Increased tenderness or soreness at the wound
- Wound edges that are no longer together
- Redness or swelling at the wound site
- Severe pain not controlled by your pain medication

## **Doctor's Appointments**

Follow-up medical visits are important after you leave the hospital. Your surgeon will generally want to see you in 2 to 4 weeks. Before you leave the hospital, you will receive more information about your follow-up visits.

If you have any questions or concerns, please call your doctor.

## **Health Information Resources**

For more information, visit one of Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Health Learning Centers. These state-of-the-art health libraries are located on the third floor of the Galter Pavilion and on the first floor of the Prentice Women's Hospital. Health information professionals are available to help you find the information you need and provide you with personalized support at no charge. You may contact the Health Learning Centers by calling 312-926-LINK (5465) or by sending an e-mail to [hlc@nmh.org](mailto:hlc@nmh.org).

For additional information about Northwestern Memorial Hospital, please visit our Web site at [www.nmh.org](http://www.nmh.org).

Northwestern Memorial is an equal opportunity employer that welcomes, respects and serves with dignity all people and does not discriminate, including in hiring, or employment, or admission, or access to, or treatment in its programs or activities on the basis of race, color, gender, national origin, religion, disability, handicap, age, Vietnam or other veteran status, sexual orientation or any other status protected by relevant law. To arrange for TDD/TTY, auxiliary aids and foreign language interpretation services, call the Patient Representative department at 312-926-3112, TDD number 312-944-2358. Issues related to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 should be directed to the director of Employee Relations or designee at 312-926-7297.

Developed by: Surgical Nursing

© September 2007. Northwestern Memorial Hospital  
1100-07  
900637 (09/07)