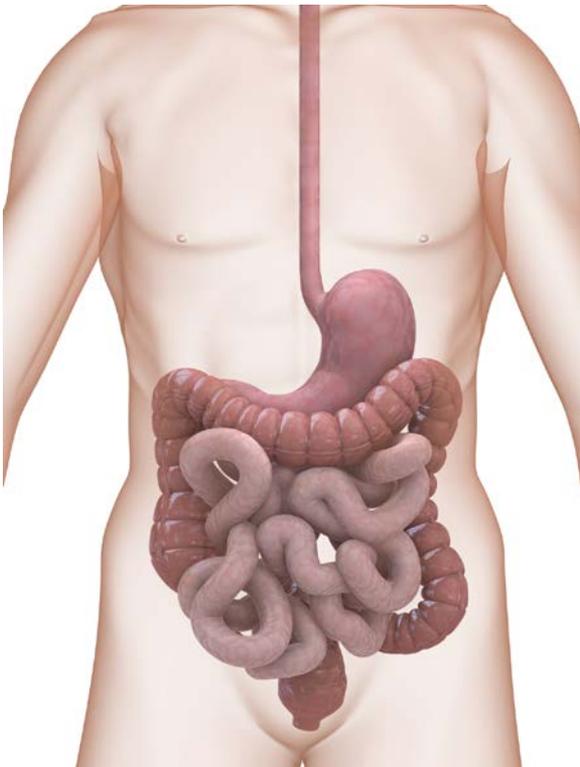




Interior Health

Enhanced Recovery After Colorectal Surgery (ERACS)

Discharge Booklet



Enhanced Recovery After Colorectal Surgery (ERACS)

Post-Op Patient Information



Congratulations! You are ready for discharge from the hospital in order to continue your recovery process at home. This process takes time, and for each individual, this will vary. This is due to your age, general health condition, type of surgery and any complications you may have had after your surgery. Please do not get frustrated if it takes you longer than you expect. You have just undergone major surgery, and your body needs time to continue to heal and adjust. However, you should see slow and steady recovery over the upcoming weeks. Please give yourself time to heal after surgery!

Diet and Bowel Function

After colorectal surgery, it will take time for you to fully regain your appetite. This should continue to improve as you continue your recovery at home. You may need to eat smaller, more frequent meals throughout the day, instead of our typical three big meals at breakfast, lunch and dinner. You may also continue to use nutritional supplements, such as Boost® or Ensure®, at home if desired. If you are concerned about your diet, our hospital dietitian can provide you with food instructions prior to your discharge home. Please ensure you keep up your fluid intake (2 to 3 litres a day) at home! Please do not drink alcohol, especially if you are taking pain pills, when you return home.



Your bowel movements may be unpredictable for the first couple of weeks, ranging from diarrhea to constipation. Please ensure you remain active (2 to 3 walks a day) and have a balanced diet with plenty of fluids. If you have frequent, non-resolving diarrhea, please see your family doctor.

If you are on pain pills for pain control (such as Tylenol #3[®]), please watch for constipation as these medications may slow your bowels down. Your doctor may need to prescribe a gentle laxative for you (such as Colace[®]). Please do not administer rectal suppositories or Fleet[®] enemas without doctor direction.



Medications at home

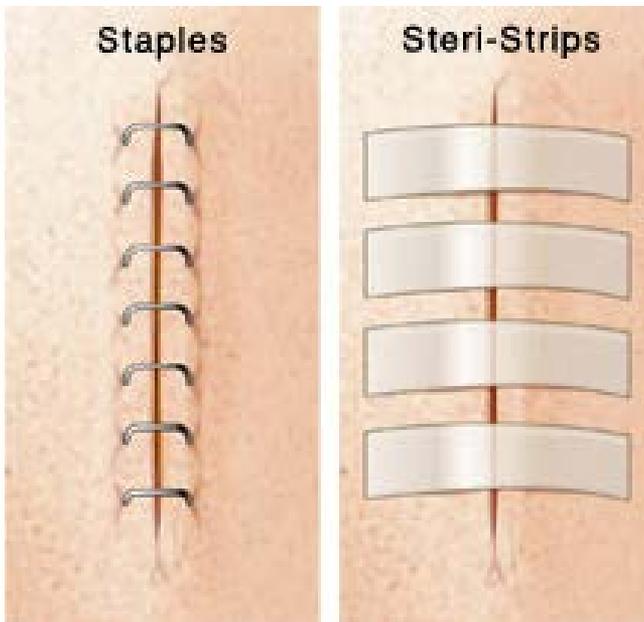
Once you are discharged home, you will resume your usual medications. If there are any changes, your doctor will instruct you prior to your discharge home. If you are given additional



medications, such as antibiotics, please take them as prescribed until they are finished. Please do not stop your antibiotics simply because you are feeling well. It is normal to experience some pain for days to weeks following major surgery. Your surgeon will prescribe pain medications for you upon discharge. If you find they are not relieving your pain at home, please contact your family doctor.

Care of your incision at home

Your incision line will not be fully healed upon discharge home. You may leave the hospital with staples in your incision line. Your surgeon will tell you if you need to see your family doctor for staple removal. Once the staples are removed, strips of tape (called steri-strips) will be applied to continue to support your incision line. Please do not remove them yourself, but rather let them peel up on their own. You may trim the edges with clean scissors as they peel up. The steri-strips will stay on for 5–7 days.



If your incision is not draining, you may leave it open to the air. If there is any drainage (this fluid should be a watery, light colored fluid), you may have to use a small strip dressing over your incision line. If the fluid from your incision changes, and becomes thick, mucky and/or has an unusual smell, please see your doctor.

If your surgeon feels that you require community nursing for incision or wound care, or your ostomy if present, this will be set up prior to you leaving the hospital. Once you are home, you will be contacted by the community care nurses to arrange your care.

You may shower at home, but please do not soak in a bathtub, hot tub or pool until instructed that you may do so. When showering, do not have the shower spray directly on your incision. Gently wash the area, then pat it dry with a clean towel.

Take careful attention to protect your incision line. If you need to cough or sneeze, please hug yourself or place a pillow over your abdomen to protect the area. As well, please no heavy lifting (no more than 10–15 lbs) or strenuous activity

for 4–6 weeks after your surgery. This includes household chores such as vacuuming, carrying groceries or outdoor activities like yard work (raking, mowing lawns, etc.). Remember to keep active with light activities such as walking.



Return to Work and Driving

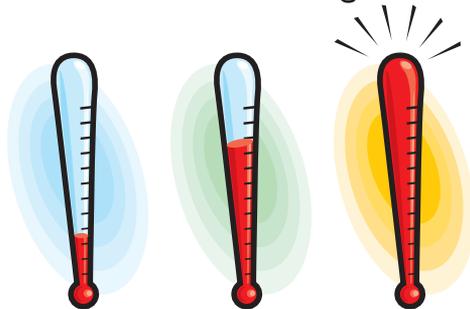
Please discuss with your surgeon when you may return to work or drive as this will vary for each individual. Your return to work will depend on the type of surgery you had, your personal recovery and the type of work that you do.

If you are taking any type of pain pills, do not drive as this type of medication may impair your coordination, concentration and reaction times. Please keep yourself (and others) safe on the roads. Your abdominal incision does not prevent you from wearing your seatbelt. It must be used at all times in your vehicle. If the seatbelt feels uncomfortable, try using a small pillow or pad for increased comfort.



Please seek medical attention if...

- your incision line begins to open up
- your incision line looks infected (it may be red, warm, swollen, painful, unusual smell, and/or draining mucky fluid)
- you have a persistent low-grade fever (greater than or equal to 38° C)
- you have a fever spike (greater than or equal to 39° C) with or without shakes and body chills
- you have nausea and vomiting and cannot eat or drink
- you feel suddenly short of breath
- your calves (lower portion of your legs) become swollen and painful
- you have increasing pain that is not controlled with the medications prescribed
- you have unresolved or significant diarrhea



Follow-Up Appointments

Please call to set up your own appointment times that work with your personal schedule.

Please see your family doctor in:

Please see your surgeon in:

We wish you well in your continued recovery at home. Please contact your family doctor and surgeon as directed above, as they will continue to monitor your progress in the community. If you have questions or concerns, please contact them sooner rather than later. We want you to have the best surgical experience and recovery possible.

Thank you from your Surgical Team

