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Abdominoplasty (Tummy Tuck) - Post Operative Instructions

At home after surgery: Dr. Hoefflin recommends resting quietly for the first 48 hours after surgery. You should walk or ambulate every couple of hours (with assistance) while maintaining a flexed or bent position (as to alleviate tension on your healing incisions.) Ambulation, or walking, is encouraged and is one of the best ways of maintaining lower extremity blood flow and preventing venous blood clots (DVTs).

Positioning: When resting, you should maintain a flexed position by placing several pillows beneath both your thighs and your back. It typically takes four to five days to stand in a full upright position.

Diet: Start with a light diet, preferably liquids or soups, and then progress to a regular diet after 24 hours. This will minimize any post-operative nausea. You should start taking a stool softener the day after your surgery. Avoid salt as it can promote swelling.

Liquids: Drink plenty of fluids (8-10 glasses/day) with either water or electrolyte drinks (Gatorade) to maintain your hydration for the first week following surgery.

Antibiotics: Dr. Hoefflin will prescribe you either Keflex (Cephalexin) 500 mg or Cleocin (Clindamycin) 300 mg (if allergic to penicillin or cephalosporins). Keflex should be taken 1 tablet, four times per day; Cleocin should be taken 1 tablet, three times per day. All antibiotics should be taken with food.

Discomfort: Chest discomfort, soreness, and pressure can be minimized with pain medication. Start with ½ a tablet of a pain pill initially, of which may be followed every 3 – 4 hours by another. It is best to take pain medication with food. Keep in mind that the pain medication can cause constipation. A helpful adjunct is to replace every other dose of pain medication with a tablet of Tylenol (650 mg) to help minimize inflammation. Avoid driving or consuming alcohol while taking prescription pain medicine.

Incisions: Your incision line will be covered with special steri-strip tapes, of which should be left in place for 10 days. After 10 days, when showering, you may gently wash your abdomen with soap and slowly remove the tapes that are starting to lift off.

Drains: Small drains may be placed under your skin to remove any accumulating fluid after surgery. Our staff will instruct you on the day of surgery on how to perform these functions. The bulbs connected to the end of the drains should be kept compressed at all

times. Please remove the fluid and record the output from the bulb three times per day. Bring this record with you to each office appointment. Drains are typically removed when you are draining less than 30 cc's within a 24 hour period.

Showering: You may shower on the 3rd day after surgery with assistance. You should have someone assist you, as it is not uncommon to experience some dizziness during this initial shower. Before taking a shower, remove the Velcro binder and gauze pads covering your incisions. These gauze pads may be replaced after showering if needed. The small white tapes (“steri-strips”) that directly cover your incisions should be left on for 10 days. You may wash yourself everywhere with a mild soap. Avoid submerging your incisions in a bath, swimming pool, or whirlpool for two weeks after surgery.

Swelling: Maximal swelling typically occurs three to four days after surgery, then begins to dramatically improve. Mild bruising typically resolves within 7-10 days after surgery. Mild or subtle inflammation may take up to several weeks to one month to completely resolve. Your final aesthetic appearance may take 6-12 weeks. **Arnica Montana** (can be purchased at our office), taken both before and after surgery, can assist in decreasing any postoperative swelling or bruising.

Activity: For the **five days** after surgery, be sure to maintain your flexed or bent position when walking. This will alleviate tension on your healing abdominal incision. Use your arms to support your body when walking. **Do not lift anything heavier than 10 pounds for the first few weeks after surgery. After 2 weeks**, you may engage in light activity (i.e. light walking). **By 4 weeks**, stretching, yoga, or light-weight exercises can be resumed. Heavy weights and all pre-surgery activity may be resumed **after 6 weeks**. You may drive one week after you tummy tuck surgery provided you can respond and stop in emergency situations.

Sutures: All abdominal sutures are absorbable, and typically dissolve after four to six weeks. Umbilical sutures are not absorbable, and are typically removed 7 days after surgery.

Abdominal binder: Dr. Hoefflin will provide you with a soft, elastic Velcro binder, which should be continuously worn for four weeks. This binder helps with compression, comfort, and will help you achieve your final contoured result more quickly.

Sensation: It is normal to have itching and/or areas of numbness along your abdominal wall following your surgery. This gradually subsides after 2-3 months as your body progresses through the healing process.

Follow-up appointment: Your first postoperative appointment to see Dr. Hoefflin typically occurs 24 hours after surgery. This should be scheduled prior to your surgery.

Massaging exercises: Massaging exercises are initiated one week after surgery, which assists in reducing residual post-operative inflammation as well as reducing the appearance of your incisional scars. Dr. Hoefflin will provide you with information on such exercises during your post-operative appointment.

Endermologie®: Using a safe and non-surgical patented technique, Endermologie®

assists patients in reducing their post-operative inflammation by removing any post-operative toxins or water accumulation after surgery. In addition, local blood circulation and collagen restoration are improved. The final result is a more quickly achieved smooth and sculpted body appearance. Dr. Hoefflin encourages patients to start their Endermologie® program five days after their surgery.

[To read more about Dr. Hoefflin's post-operative Endermologie program, click here.](#)

Minimizing long-term scar visibility: Avoid direct sunlight exposure to your healing scars for the first year following surgery. Select a sunscreen with zinc oxide along with a SPF of 30 or greater for maximal protection. Scars typically fade in months to a year after your surgery. You may start applying a scar cream (available at our office) to minimizing your scar appearance, starting at week 3. The scar cream should be used for 6 months after surgery.

Smoking: Do not smoke. This is important. Smoking delays healing and can increase your risk of complications.

Concerns:

Dr. Hoefflin can be reached 24 hours a day for any concerns. He can be contacted directly through his office or answering exchange at (310) 858-9105.

Please notify Dr. Hoefflin if:

- If you experience increased bleeding from your incision sites, which does not stop after several minutes of gentle pressure;
- If your drainage output significantly increases from previous levels;
- If you develop significant bruising across the abdomen;
- If you experience a significant increase in pain not relieved by medication;
- If you develop a temperature above 101.5° F, or if you develop redness (like a sunburn) around your incisions;
- If you have any yellowish or greenish drains from the incisions or notice a foul odor;
- If you have any side effects to medications, such as rash, nausea, headache, or vomiting;
- If you have any bleeding from the incisions that is difficult to control with light pressure.

The quality of your tummy tuck procedure may be compromised if you fail to return for any scheduled post-op visits, or follow Dr. Hoefflin's pre- and post- operative instructions.