

# POST-OPERATIVE GUIDELINES FOR PLASTIC SURGERY

## **What Can I Expect During My Recovery?**

The recovery time and care needed after a surgical procedure will vary depending on the surgery you receive and your individual circumstances. Your surgeon will let you know how long it will be before you can return to your normal level of activity and give you and your caregiver detailed instructions about your post-operative care after your surgery. It is important you follow all the patient care instructions your surgeon provides.

## **TYPICAL SYMPTOMS:**

Following your surgery, you will likely have bruising, redness, swelling, and some pain, but this will depend on the procedure you had and your individual tolerances.

Bruising typically disappears within seven to ten days. Remember that you must not take aspirin or certain anti-inflammatory medications as these could make bruising worse and lead to bleeding.

Swelling is a normal response after surgery. Keep the operated region elevated to help reduce swelling. Ask your surgeon about whether you can use cool compresses to help relieve discomfort and decrease swelling.

For most procedures, the first two to three days is when you will experience the most discomfort, and you should expect to take oral pain medications on a scheduled basis (as prescribed by your surgeon). The discomfort level should rapidly decrease, and most patients can reduce medication to an as-needed basis by the fourth to seventh day after surgery.

## **RECOVERY TIME:**

It's always tempting to return to your daily routine, but your body needs time to heal. Surgery takes a tremendous toll on the body, and following your surgeons' orders, both pre-and post-surgery, is essential to a happy and complication-free recovery. The ideal amount of recovery time will vary from patient to patient.

The decision to return to your normal lifestyle will depend on several variables, such as:

The procedure you underwent

What your job entails

Your exercise routine- we recommend patients wait six to eight weeks before beginning to build up to their previous fitness regimen.

How your body is responding to the surgery

## **FOLLOW-UP VISITS:**

Please remember that the relationship with your plastic surgeon does not end when you leave the operating room. If you have questions or concerns during your recovery or need additional information, you should contact your surgeon. You will return to your plastic surgeon's office for follow-up care at prescribed intervals so your surgeon can evaluate your progress.

## **COMPLICATIONS:**

Your surgeon will alert you to the signs of problems to watch for, such as:

Increase in swelling, pain, redness, drainage

Bleeding in the surgical area

Fever, dizziness, nausea, or vomiting

Shortness of breath, chest pains, or unusual heartbeat

An accumulation of blood or fluid under the skin

Signs of infection

Changes in sensation

If you experience any of these symptoms, you should contact your surgeon right away.

You should discuss the risks and potential complications with your aesthetic plastic surgeon before and after your procedure to ensure you are on the right track to recovery.

## **POST-OPERATIVE CARE:**

### **Drains:**

- Keep your drainage bulbs collapsed and record time and amounts of drainage over a 24-hour period. Generally, the drains will be removed when the drainage is 30 cc or less over a 72-hour period.
- Empty drains on a schedule. You can choose to empty the drains and record the value three times a day (every 8 hours), twice a day (every 12 hours), or if not producing too much fluid, once a day.
- It is normal for your drain sites to leak fluid for the first few days. Do not be alarmed if this happens. You can place ABD pads or 4x4's on the drain site to collect draining fluid.
- It is normal for drain sites to sting or ache a bit. It is also normal for one drain site to release more fluid than the other(s).
- It is normal for over-activity to result in more drainage.
- It is normal for stringy and thicker clots to appear in your drain bulb.
- Do **NOT** remove your drains on your own.

**Sutures:**

- Keep incisions clean and dry. Do not apply any creams, lotions, or products over your incisions.
- Sutures are dissolvable and will dissolve over the first few weeks of healing.

**Tape:**

- Paper tape is applied post-surgery. Do **NOT** remove them. Tapes will be changed as necessary during your post-operative and follow-up visits. If any irritation occurs, please contact the office prior to removing the tape at home.

**Supplements:**

- Do not take aspirin (or products containing aspirin), anti-inflammatory medication, or Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, Midol) for three (3) weeks after surgery.
- You may begin herbal supplements after 2 weeks.
- You may begin Arnica and Bromelain prior to surgery and continue afterwards.

**Sleeping:**

- We recommend you sleep semi-upright, at about a 45-degree incline for the first week after surgery. Sleeping elevated minimizes post-op swelling, discomfort, and strain to incision sites. After the first seven days, you may sleep lying straight on your back.
- While resting in bed, you may use a wedge pillow or stack 2-3 pillows behind your back. You can also add a small pillow under your knees to help with relief of lower back pain. A neck pillow may also provide extra support.
- You may resume side sleeping after 6 weeks. Stomach sleeping is not recommended and is discouraged.
- You may lie on your stomach if getting a massage 6 months after surgery.

**Walking:**

- It is important to get out of bed early and often after your surgery (with assistance) to prevent post-operative problems. We recommend getting up to walk once every hour. This encourages blood flow throughout your legs to reduce the chance of blood clot development.
- If you have shortness of breath, leg swelling, and/or leg pain at any point in your post-operative healing, please contact the office.

### Showering:

- You may shower (but not bathe) 48-hours after surgery, unless instructed otherwise, even with drains.
- Do not allow the showerhead to face the surgical area for the first week— the pressure of the water on your incision might be painful. Allow the water to run down your back and trickle forward. Do not use any soap on your incisions and shower in lukewarm water. Do not use surgical soaps to wash the area as these are drying to the skin.
- Remove all garments and dressings when showering. Tapes will stay in place.
- When out of the shower, pat dry and/or blow dry incisions on a cool setting. Once the tapes are dry, you may re-apply all compression garments.
- We recommend that you have help during your first shower.

### Driving:

- **DO NOT DRIVE WHILE TAKING PAIN MEDICATION.** Medication may result in drowsiness. Driving under the influence of drugs is a crime.
- Driving may resume 5 to 7 days post-op, when you're no longer taking prescription medication, and a sharp turn of the steering wheel is not causing any discomfort.

### Exercise:

- You may not lift anything heavier than 10 pounds for the first six to eight weeks.
- You may resume light activity when cleared by the plastic surgeon.
- Avoid overheating or sweating for the first 6 weeks (no spas, saunas, sunbathing, etc.)