



MAJOR OPERATION

ADVICE FOR GOING HOME

Before you go home

Discharge time at the Women's is 9.30am so please arrange to be collected at this time. If you are unable to be taken home at this time, you may be asked to wait in the patient lounge as we arrange accommodation of new admissions. Often it is helpful to take most items and flowers home the night before discharge so that you can concentrate on yourself in the morning.

Before you leave the hospital, make sure you have:

- » all medications you brought to hospital
- » all new medications that the pharmacist has supplied
- » any x-rays that you may have brought in
- » an appointment to return to the clinic for a check-up, (usually in six weeks unless the doctor wants to see you earlier). If an appointment is not made at the time of your discharge, it will be sent out to you in the mail
- » a medical certificate if you need one.

Some women will also be given a letter for their GP.

What to expect after you go home

- » The time it takes to recover from a major operation is different for each person. We expect that it will take between six and eight weeks.
- » Vaginal bleeding will continue for five to ten days and there will be spotting for up to six weeks after the operation. If the bleeding continues or gets heavier and becomes like a normal heavy period, you should either go to your local doctor or come back to the Women's Emergency Care. You should also see a doctor if you have offensive smelling discharge.

How to care for your wound

- » Keep your wound clean and dry. When you shower rinse with water and gently pat dry with a towel. For most patients we recommend you leave your wound uncovered. Dressings are not required after the first few days.

- » Do not use talcum powders, creams or disinfectant on your wound.
- » Watch for signs that the wound is irritated, like swelling or redness. If it is hot to touch or there is a discharge you should go to your local doctor or come back to the Women's Emergency Care.
- » Drink eight glasses of fluid daily, preferably water, to avoid urinary infections.
- » Avoid heavy lifting. You should avoid lifting anything heavier than a two-litre container of milk for the first three weeks. You should also avoid pushing shopping trolleys.
- » Avoid heavy housework or other strenuous activities for at least six weeks. Heavy housework includes vacuuming, washing floors, hanging out laundry, etc. After three weeks gently ease back into such activities. If you are concerned about how you will manage with your housework please ask a nurse about the free services that can be organised to help you.
- » If you need to bend, squat at the knees rather than bending over.
- » Avoid driving a car for up to two weeks or until you feel comfortable. The reasons to avoid driving are:
 - the seat belt can aggravate the suture line
 - pressing down suddenly on brake may cause
 - insurance companies often stipulate that you must not drive for a certain period after an operation. So even though you may feel ready to drive you should check with your insurance company.
- » For laparoscopic or pelviscopic surgery, you may resume sexual intercourse after vaginal bleeding stops and when you feel comfortable. In the case of open abdominal surgery or vaginal surgery, wait until you have returned for your follow-up appointment and your doctor is happy with your recovery. If you have any questions or concerns about resuming sexual activity please speak to one of the nurses on the ward.

Pain relief and management of constipation

- » If you require pain relief medicines on discharge, a pharmacist will see you prior to discharge to supply you with these medicines. If you are discharged on the weekend or outside business hours, you will be given a prescription for pain relief medicines and this prescription can be taken your local pharmacy. Some pain relief medicines are available from pharmacies without a prescription. Check with your doctor or pharmacist before using, to see if these medicines are appropriate for you.
- » Constipation after surgery is common. Strong pain relief medicines can also contribute to constipation. Have plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables and water to help minimise constipation as tolerated. You can also purchase a laxative from your local pharmacy without a prescription, if needed. Ask your pharmacist or doctor for advice.

Be aware of signs of infection

The following symptoms may be a sign of infection:

- » sudden hot flushes or sweating
- » high temperatures above 38°C
- » sudden onset of pain that is not relieved by analgesia.

If you experience any of these symptoms please see your local doctor or come to the Women's Emergency Care.

If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact the ward.

In the event of an emergency

If you require urgent attention after discharge you should contact your local doctor or present to your closest Emergency Department.

In the event of an emergency call 000 immediately for ambulance care.

For more information

**Women's Gynaecology Clinics –
For appointments, re-bookings & cancellations**
Tel: (03) 8345 3033

Nurse on Call

Tel: 1300 60 60 24 for general health advice and information 24 hours a day.

Better Health Channel

www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

Related fact sheets

- » *After your operation – helping you recover*
- » *Normal bowel function*

This fact sheet is a general overview of the operation and may not apply to everyone. If you have any further questions please speak to your gynaecologist.