FORM
CAMPUS
DR. RON SOMOGYI, MD, FRCSC · DR. CORY GOLDBERG, MD, FRCSC · DR. MICHAEL BRANDT, MD, FRCSC

POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

Tummy Tuck and Belt Lipectomy

The following aftercare information will help make your surgery safe and uneventful. It is important that you understand all of it. If you have any questions, please ask your surgeon or our team. In some cases there will be variations to these instructions, and these will be discussed with you.

WOUND CARE

After surgery, there will be a special tape and glue along the incision line. This will be covered with an abdominal pad (soft padding), and you will be wrapped in an abdominal compression garment. Occasionally, blood may leak out from beneath the tapes. Keep this area clean and apply a clean gauze dressing. If bleeding continues, please contact us for instructions.

Please do not bathe or shower until after your first follow-up appointment. Once you begin showering, the tapes will slowly lift off on their own. In most cases, it takes 3 weeks for the tapes to come off completely. Removal of the tape will not cause the incision to open and will not disrupt any of the stitches, which are all underneath the skin.

The belly button will not require a formal dressing, but you will need to apply Polysporin daily for at least 2 weeks. If you have drains in place, you will be taught how to milk them regularly, empty them and record the output. The drain sites should stay clean and covered at all times.

COMPRESSION GARMENT

A compression binder will be fitted during surgery, and you will wake up with it on. This is a simple spandex and Velcro garment. An ink line will be drawn at the end point of the Velcro so that you know how tightly to reapply the garment after removing it. Over time, the garment will lose some of its elasticity, and as the abdominal swelling settles, it will need to be tighter, so you will need to fasten it beyond the ink line.

The binder needs to be worn day and night for four weeks, and then during the day for another two weeks. This is because there is more swelling in the lower abdomen when you are standing during the day; at night, when you are lying down, the swelling in the lower tummy decreases. After the binder has been worn for six weeks, women are advised to wear a panty girdle (for example Spanx, Miraclesuit, Flexees or Bodywrap) for most of each day for another two months. Men may wish to continue wearing the binder instead. All the swelling will gradually subside with time.

The compression garment can be washed in a washing machine; blood stains are best removed with Hydrogen Peroxide. After washing, dry the garment on the tumble dry cycle or hang it to dry. Please do not use the heat cycle, as it may reduce the garment's elasticity. While the garment is being washed, women can wear a panty girdle, and men may benefit from the compression of a garment such as bicycle shorts. If a second garment is required, it can be obtained through the office.

PAIN MEDICATION

Most patients are pleasantly surprised by how limited their postoperative discomfort is. To reduce the need for strong pain pills, Extra Strength Tylenol (Acetaminophen) should be taken every 6 hours. Celebrex 200 mg is an anti-inflammatory and painkiller, and has been prescribed for you to take twice daily. If there is more discomfort, a stronger pain pill (Hydromorphone) has been prescribed for you to take every 6 hours as needed. This combination of anti-inflammatory and analgesic (Tylenol Extra Strength or a stronger pain pill) is now recognized as the most effective way of treating postoperative discomfort. Both can be stopped when the discomfort subsides.

Please note that all pain pills cause constipation. If you are inclined to become constipated, you should consider using a stool softener such as Colace 200 mg twice a day, and a laxative such as Milk of Magnesia, 15 to 30 cc at night. Drinking plenty of fluids and eating fruit also reduces constipation.

EATING AFTER SURGERY

Patients may experience nausea after a general anesthetic. It is therefore wise to drink clear fluids (apple juice, black tea, flat pop) until the stomach feels settled. Then try eating clear soup and crackers. A normal diet is usually possible the next day. On rare occasions, a patient may feel nauseated for a few days after surgery. Gravol tablets may then be helpful.

These instructions are general guidance. Your surgeon or provider may give you instructions specific to your care, and those take priority.

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SLEEPING POSITION

You should try to sleep on your back for the first 3-4 weeks after surgery. For the first 2 weeks, you will want to stay slightly bent or flexed at the waist, with 2 pillows under your knees. At 4 weeks, you can move onto your sides. We suggest you do not sleep on your stomach for 6 weeks after surgery.

COMPRESSION (TED) STOCKINGS

Some patients will be asked to wear support or "TED" compression stockings on the day of surgery. They are a bit like pantyhose and help reduce the formation of blood clots. They can be discarded once you are up and walking normally, typically a day or two after surgery.

BLEEDING, BRUISING AND SWELLING

Minor bleeding from the incision lines is normal after surgery and should subside within 24 hours. Bruising is the typical "black and blue" appearance of tissue after any surgery. There is great variation in how much patients bruise: some bruise very little, some more. Occasionally, the genitals are quite swollen and bruised.

As noted in your preoperative instructions, Aspirin, blood thinners, anti-inflammatories and vitamins can contribute to bruising and should be stopped for two weeks before surgery. These medications can be resumed the day after surgery. The bruising typically subsides within two weeks, but in some patients it can last longer. As it dissolves and becomes more yellowish in colour, it may appear to be "spreading". This is normal and no cause for alarm. About 80% of the swelling is typically gone within three weeks, but the last 20% can persist for a few months. It is common to have more bruising and swelling on one side than the other. This will even out with time.

ARNICA FOR BRUISING

Arnica has been shown to help decrease bruising and reduce how long bruising is visible. A combination of oral pellets and topical gel is recommended, but if you would prefer to use only one, the pellets are likely more effective. The pellets should be started two days before your procedure and continued for 3-5 days after your procedure. The gel can be started as soon as massaging it in is tolerable, and can be continued until the bruising has subsided. Storing the gel in the fridge will also provide a cooling, soothing effect on the bruised area.

Do not take off the dressing, and **do not** apply the gel on the incision itself until it has completely healed. Apply it around the procedure area to minimize swelling and bruising. **Do not** use Arnica if you are allergic to the daisy flower.

EARLY FEVER

A low-grade fever (up to 37.8°C) is not uncommon the day after surgery. It usually occurs after a general anesthetic and results from small collections of mucus in the lungs. It is therefore important after a general anesthetic to take frequent deep breaths and to cough deeply. Pressing on your tummy with your hands while coughing will reduce the discomfort. Coughing clears the lungs and corrects the low-grade fever. Failure to clear the lungs adequately can, on rare occasions, lead to a lung infection.

WOUND INFECTION

Fortunately, wound infections are uncommon. Minor leakage of clear, yellowish fluid from the stitches may occur and persist until the stitches have dissolved. This fluid is not an infection, and is managed with soap and water washes two to three times a day, followed by Polysporin ointment and a light dressing. If the drainage from the wound becomes "soupy" and smells, or is associated with increasing redness, pain and swelling, a deeper infection may be occurring.

> Do not hesitate to phone the office if this happens. You will need to be seen, as you may need antibiotics.

SCAR CREAM

Once the sutures are out, a scar cream should be massaged onto the incision lines twice a day for two to three months. If any area of drainage remains, apply Polysporin ointment rather than scar cream to that area until the drainage has stopped, then apply scar cream there too. The scar cream we recommend is available at our office. Our office staff will be happy to help you choose a scar cream and other products to help with your skin care. Please ask about these products during your pre-operative visit.

POLYSPORIN OINTMENT

Occasionally, there are small areas of drainage along the incision line. These small areas of delayed healing can open slightly, and a clear, yellowish fluid may drain out. This is not an infection. These areas should be washed with soap and water twice a day, followed by Polysporin ointment and gauze. Avoid scar cream in these areas until the wounds have completely healed, after which scar cream can also be applied there. While these small areas are healing, continue using scar cream on the rest of the incision lines.

WOUND MASSAGE

As soon as the scar cream is being applied, 10 to 14 days after surgery, gentle massage of the incision lines should also begin. After another week, this massage can become quite firm and vigorous, with deep rotary motions along the incision line and onto the abdomen itself. Firm massage helps to desensitize the scars, making them less painful, and also reduces the normal thickness and lumpiness of a scar after surgery.

NUMBNESS

It is normal to have numbness around the belly button and occasionally along the flanks (sides of the abdomen). Most of the sensation gradually returns, but there is usually some permanent numbness around the belly button and sometimes in the lower central tummy. After a belt lipectomy, the numbness may extend into the back. Numbness will continue to improve for up to two years.

SCAR REDNESS

All scars are initially reddish and thickened. This is part of the normal healing process, and they will eventually smooth out. It takes 9 to 12 months for scars to fully mature, becoming flat, light in colour and somewhat more spread.

TANNING

Fresh scars and areas that have been bruised should not be tanned for at least 6 months after surgery. Early tanning can cause permanent hyperpigmentation (darkening) of the scar and the surrounding areas. Normal tanning can resume after 6 months, but please remember that tanning causes premature skin aging and skin cancer. Sun-protective clothing, a good sunscreen or occlusive tapes are all good ways to protect the scars while they heal.

SILICONE SHEETING

Some studies suggest that silicone sheeting (such as Cica-Care or Scar Away), available in most pharmacies and online, can improve the quality of a scar. To be effective, the sheeting needs to be on the skin day and night for at least six months. It is not recommended for routine use, as it appears to have little value when scars are healing normally. We do recommend it for wounds showing evidence of prolonged redness or abnormal scar maturation, which occurs in less than 5% of patients.

RESUMING ACTIVITIES

Patients are encouraged to be up and walking on the day of surgery, and certainly the day after. Walking is important for circulation and reduces the small chance of developing blood clots.

Tummy-tightening exercises such as sit-ups, leg raises and pelvic tilts should be avoided for six weeks after a tummy tuck. This allows the tummy muscles, which have been tightened, to heal properly. After six weeks, you are encouraged to resume all your tummy exercises. The muscles will be working much more effectively at that point, and toning them is important to enhance your profile. Jogging should be avoided for 6 weeks to prevent excessive pulling on the incision lines. Power walking and upper body (shoulder and arm) exercises can be started 4 weeks after surgery.

DRIVING

You must not drive for at least 24 hours after a sedative or a general anesthetic, or if you feel drowsy for any reason. Do not drive if you are having any pain, as the pain may cause you to jerk the steering wheel and lose control. You must also avoid driving if you are in any way restricted in your mobility, as this may compromise safe driving. On average, it will be 2-4 weeks before you feel comfortable driving again after a tummy tuck.

FATIGUE AND "FEELING DOWN"

While the results of plastic surgery are typically gratifying and uplifting, it is not uncommon for patients to have "down" times. Early on, there is the residual effect of the anesthetic, coupled with discomfort, swelling and bruising at the surgical site. This is followed by the typically slow maturation of the scar itself. These frustrations can weigh on you, making you question why you chose to have surgery in the first place. You are not alone with these thoughts, and they are entirely normal. Rest assured that virtually all of our patients are ultimately pleased with the results of their surgery, and the apprehension and "down" times are eventually replaced by feelings of satisfaction and confidence.

QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

Every effort is made to provide you with a surgical experience that is safe and as comfortable as possible. Any suggestions you have that might improve the experience are much appreciated. If you have any questions, concerns or problems, please call the office at 416-447-6176.

> If there is an urgent situation and we are not immediately available, please go to the emergency department at North York General Hospital or your closest emergency department.

We hope you have a speedy recovery from your surgery.