

After your gynecological laparoscopy (operative)

For patients of St. Joseph's Health Centre

How will I feel after surgery?

You may feel tired, dizzy and nauseous (feel sick to your stomach) after the surgery. This is normal and you will start to feel better in a few days.

How to stay safe after surgery

- You must have an adult with you on the night after surgery. You should not be alone in case you need help or have an emergency.
- For the first 24 hours after your surgery:
 - **Do not** drive a motor vehicle, operate machinery or sign legal papers.
 - **Do not** drink any alcohol.
- If you have a CPAP machine for sleep apnea, use it during all naps and at bedtime, unless you get different instructions.
- If you use cannabis, ask your doctor when it is safe for you to start using it after your surgery.

Activity

- Rest on the day of your surgery.
- You can do light activities like washing dishes, the day after your surgery. Take frequent rest periods during the first 3 days.
- Avoid heavy physical exercise such as pushing, pulling or lifting anything over 10 pounds (4.5 kilograms). No sports, running or exercise for 2 to 3 weeks.
- Do not travel long distances until at least 2 days after surgery.

- Your doctor will tell you when you can return to work.
- You can have sex again when it is comfortable, or when your doctor says it's okay.

Food and nutrition

- After surgery, start by drinking fluids. You may eat a small light meal if you feel well enough to do so.
- If you feel nauseous, stop eating solid foods. Drink clear fluids (water, clear juices or broth) until your stomach feels better. Check with your doctor or pharmacist before taking any anti-nausea medicine.
- You can return to your normal diet the day after surgery.

Managing pain

- It is normal to have some pain and discomfort after surgery.
- It is common to feel body aches after this surgery. You may feel aching in your neck, shoulders, back and abdomen (belly).
- You may be able to manage mild pain with rest and acetaminophen (Tylenol[®]) - Regular or Extra Strength. Do not take more than 4000 mg each day.
- You may get a prescription for an opioid pain medicine. Take this medicine as directed.
- If you feel nauseous, sleepy or dizzy after taking opioid medicine, take it with food and lots of water.
- If you have no pain, it is okay to miss a dose or stop taking your pain medicine.

Taking opioid medicine safely

- Do not drive while taking opioid medicine. Wait until your doctor clears you to drive.
- Do not drink alcohol while taking opioid medicine.

- Do not take a sleeping pill while taking opioid medicine, unless your doctor or pharmacist says it's okay.
- If you have sleep apnea, it is important to use your CPAP machine as directed while taking opioid medicine.
- Keep your opioid medicine in a safe place, especially if you have young children or teenagers. Return all opioid medicine that you do not use to your pharmacy.

Taking other medicine

Take your normal medicine as directed. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about taking any new medicines.

Wound care and hygiene

- Always wash your hands before and after touching your bandage or wound.
- You will have 3 or 4 small wounds that will be covered with white tape strips. These may be covered by a bandage. Remove the outside bandage after 24 hours.
- Your wound may bleed a small amount for the first 2 to 3 days after surgery. If it does, apply gentle pressure for 15 minutes to stop the bleeding. If your wound continues to leak a little bit, you can place a new bandage over the wound until it stops.
- Leave the white tape strips in place. They will fall off in 5 to 7 days. If they do not fall off, remove them.
- The stitches will dissolve on their own.
- You may shower the day after surgery. Do not let the water spray directly on your wounds. Pat dry with a clean towel. Do not rub your wounds.
- Do not smoke. Smoking will delay wound healing.

Constipation

Constipation can be a side effect of opioid pain medicine. To help prevent it:

- Get up, move around and walk several times each day
- Add fiber to your diet. Good sources of fiber are bran, whole grain breads and cereals, fruits and vegetables, and prune juice.
- Drink plenty of water – about 4 to 6 glasses per day.
- If you are not having regular bowel movements, you may need to take a stool softener or a laxative. Speak to a pharmacist about which one to use.
- If you do not have a bowel movement in the 3 days after surgery, call your doctor.

Special instructions from your surgeon

- It is normal to have some vaginal discharge for 4 to 6 weeks. This may include some bleeding. Use sanitary pads.
- Do not use tampons or douches or insert any medicine into your vagina until your doctor says it's okay. This will help prevent infection.

When should I get help?

Contact your doctor if:

- You cannot stay awake and carry on conversations after taking the opioid pain medicine
- You have increased pain and tenderness not relieved by pain medicine
- You have chills or a fever with a temperature over 38 degrees Celsius
- The skin around your wounds is very red, swollen or warm
- You have green or yellow foul smelling fluid leaking from your wounds
- You have foul-smelling vaginal discharge or urine (pee)
- You have increasing burning or discomfort when you pass urine (pee) or this gets worse
- You are not getting better each day

If you cannot reach your doctor, go to your nearest Emergency department.

Go to Emergency or call 911 if:

- You have bright red vaginal bleeding greater than a menstrual period that soaks a sanitary pad in less than 2 hours.
- You are vomiting for 4 hours and are unable to keep fluids down.
- You have sudden shortness of breath or trouble breathing, a sudden start of chest pain, fast heartbeat or pain in your calf. These could be signs of a blood clot. Call for emergency help right away.

My follow-up appointment

Date: _____ Time: _____

If you do not have an appointment scheduled, call your doctor after you get home to schedule a follow-up appointment in ___ weeks, as directed.

Check that you understand

To make sure these instructions are clear, tell your health care provider:

- When you should go to the Emergency Department
- How you will care for your wound site

My notes

Unity Health Toronto cares about your health. For health information you can trust, visit us online at unityhealth.to/learn

This information does not replace the advice you receive from your health care provider. If you have questions, ask your health care team.