



## Laparotomy (open abdominal surgery) Post-Operative Care

After your laparotomy procedure you will typically stay in hospital 1-2 nights, depending on your recovery. Before you go home, ideally you should be able to walk around slowly by yourself, tolerate normal drinking and eating, has passed urine and opened your bowel.

### CATHETER

After the operation, you will be transferred from theatre recovery to the hospital ward. You will have a catheter left in your bladder. The Catheter can be removed after breakfast the following day, if you are able to mobilise to the toilet by yourself by then. If you need a longer time to recover to that stage, the catheter can be removed on the second morning after your operation.

### PAIN

You will be given pain control medication in the hospital and to go home with. Most women will need the stronger pain medication from the hospital for the first 3-5 days after the operation. It is important that you take enough pain medication to allow you to take deep breaths, cough, and walk around slowly. Most women will only need simple pain medication only, such as Panadol and/or anti-inflammatory medications such as Nurofen after 5-7 days post operation. Severe pain is unusual and should be reported to our rooms.

### HOME

Once home, take your time when standing up from a prone position and mobilise slowly during the day. After anaesthetics and/or when taking pain medication you can be more prone to constipation, so it is important to ensure you maintain adequate fluid intake and fibre. You may require additional assistance from laxatives (available without a prescription from your local pharmacy) in the short term after the operation to help encourage bowel movement. Your local pharmacist can provide information on the most appropriate options. Resume a normal diet as tolerated. If you are vomiting or unable to tolerate fluids, please contact our rooms.

### WOUND

After the procedure you may shower as normal, and pat dry the wound area with a clean towel. Aim to keep your dressing on intact, for at least 10-14 days. The dressing should not be touched or changed unless water has soaked through the dressing (the wet patch will show as a cloudy white area under your see-through dressing). If you have any concerns regarding infection of your wounds, or problems with your dressings (including not remaining watertight for the first 7 days, smell or bleeding/discharge from wounds), you can either contact our rooms, see your local GP, or attend your local Emergency Department for the wound to be examined and the dressing to be removed/changed earlier if required.

### MOBILISATION and ACTIVITIES

After the operation please limit your activities for the first 3 weeks. You may need to have rest periods throughout the day before gradually resuming usual activities. You can start gentle walking as a form of exercise after 3 weeks but, if your wound hurts or you feel exhausted, stop, rest and take some pain relief medication. After 4 weeks you can return to most normal activities including sexual intercourse (**excluding** heavy straining, strenuous exercise and high impact activities or anything that requires core muscle activation). You can then return to full normal activities after 6 weeks unless otherwise advised at your post-operative appointment with Dr Alice Huang.

Compression stockings on your legs are recommended to be worn during the first 6 weeks, until you return to unrestricted mobility. Please report any swelling, redness or pain in your legs to our rooms. Once you are moving around regularly you can stop wearing the compression stockings.

Driving is variable between people – to self-test if you can drive or not, you should be able to slam on the brakes and turn around quickly without pain or restrictions. On average this is usually after 6 weeks, however some people do return to driving earlier. Please be aware that some car insurance companies will have their own recommendations for post-operative recovery period before driving and if you return to driving earlier you may not be covered in the event of an accident. We advise you to check your coverage before returning to driving.

#### *How to contact Dr Alice Huang:*

Office Hours: Monday – Friday, 9am – 4pm

Please call (03) 9417 1088 or email [reception@dralicehuang.com.au](mailto:reception@dralicehuang.com.au) Emergency After Hours Pager: (03) 9387 1000

#### *In an Emergency, please attend your local emergency department, or either:*

The Women's Emergency, Grattan St, Parkville (03) 8345 2000 or

Epworth Richmond Emergency, Bridge Road, Richmond (03) 9426 6302

#### **Disclaimer:**

This advice is intended as a guide only. Each patient is an individual and treatments may vary. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact our rooms for assistance.