

NEWTON-WELLESLEY SURGEONS, INC.

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POSTOPERATIVE SIGMOID COLON SURGERY INSTRUCTIONS

- Surgery** You have just undergone surgery to remove part of your sigmoid colon and/or part of your rectum. This involves making one incision in the middle of your abdomen in order to remove part of your colon. The colon is reconnected using a small stapler. The abdominal wall is then sutured closed and your incisions are closed with absorbable sutures under the skin or staples. If this surgery was done as an emergency, you may have a colostomy or ileostomy. The average hospital stay is usually 5 to 7 days and will be determined by how quickly your intestines resume their normal function.
- Pain** Upon discharge from the hospital, you will be given a prescription for pain medication. Because pain medication can be constipating, be sure to drink lots of fluids. It may also be helpful to take a stool softener such as Colace, Metamucil or Citrucel, once or twice a day if you are constipated.
- However, because part of your colon was removed, you may experience loose stools for several days or even months. This is normal and will resolve after the remaining colon does the job of absorbing water. Being up and about after surgery is also helpful in regulating bowel function. To minimize pain when you are moving about, support your incision with a small pillow or rolled up towel. Sleeping with a pillow under or between your knees will relieve stress on the incision area.
- Diet** If your sigmoid colon was removed because of diverticulitis, you need to stay on a low residue diet until instructed otherwise (approximately 4 weeks). If your colon was removed for any other condition, there are no restrictions on your diet after this procedure. You may find that some foods are better tolerated by your body while others are not. Use your own judgment and stay away from foods that may irritate your system. If you find that you are constipated after you are discharged you may start to take Colace, Metamucil or Citrucel.
- Incision** Your incision is closed with stitches which are below the skin or staples. If you have staples, they will need to be removed in the office about 10 days after the procedure. If your incision is closed with stitches, the incision will be covered by Steri-strips which will fall off on their own in the first two weeks. If they do not fall off, I will remove them in the office.
- If you have a colostomy or ileostomy, you have already met with our skin care specialist and have received special information from her.
- Bathing** After your discharge it is okay to take a shower. Be careful not to scrub at the incision lines, simply let the water run over the incision and gently pat the area dry.
- Activity** Following surgery, you are encouraged to do as much walking as is comfortable. You may climb stairs, taking them one at a time and slowly. You are not to operate a vehicle while you are having discomfort or taking pain medication. This will interfere with you driving safely. Your surgeon will tell you when it is safe to resume driving. You are asked to not do any lifting over 25 pounds for the first 6 weeks following surgery. The doctor will tell you when it is safe to do more. If lifting causes pain in your incision, please stop. If pain persists, call the office and speak with the nurse.
- Precautions** Although not commonly seen, any incision is susceptible to infection. If you develop a fever, of 101 degrees or above, have unexpected pain, redness or drainage from the incision, please contact my office. In addition, if you experience crampy abdominal pain or worsening abdominal pain, nausea or vomiting call the office immediately.
- Follow-up** Please call the office to schedule your postoperative appointment for approximately 2 weeks after surgery. Call the office a day or two after you go home to schedule your appointment. **If you have any questions about your recovery, please do not hesitate to call our office.**