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## **Postoperative Suggestions Following Sphincterotomy**

Lateral internal sphincterotomy is surgery to help heal an anal fissure that has not improved with medicine or other treatments. Most people notice that the pain from an anal fissure goes away within a few days after the surgery. You may be worried about having a bowel movement after your surgery. You will likely have some pain with bowel movements at first, but it should be less than what you had before the surgery. You may notice some blood on your toilet paper after you have a bowel movement for the first few weeks after surgery. You can make your bowel movements less painful by getting enough fiber and fluids and using stool softeners or laxatives. Sitting in warm water (sitz bath) after bowel movements will also help.

Most people can go back to work and their normal routine 1 week after surgery – sometimes sooner. It will probably take about 6 weeks for your anus to completely heal. Most people get better without any problems. A VERY small number of people have problems controlling stools when they pass gas. This almost always gets better with time.

This care sheet gives you a general idea about how long it will take for you to recover. Each person recovers at a different pace. Follow the steps below to get better as quickly as possible.

### **Activity**

- Rest when you feel tired. Getting enough sleep will help you recover.
- Try to walk each day. Start by walking a little more than you did the day before. Bit by bit, increase the amount you walk. Walking boosts blood flow and helps prevent pneumonia and constipation.
- Ask your doctor when you can drive again.
- Most people are able to return to work 1 week after surgery – sometimes sooner (within a couple of days).
- Shower or take baths as usual. Pat your anal area dry with a towel when you are done.

### **Diet**

- You can eat your normal diet. If your stomach is upset, try eating bland, low-fat foods like plain rice, broiled chicken, toast, and yogurt.
- Drink plenty of fluids (unless your doctor has told you not to).
- It is important to eat high-fiber foods after your surgery. This will make it easier to have bowel movements.
- You may notice that your bowel movements are not regular right after your surgery. This is common. Try to avoid constipation and straining with bowel movements. You may want to take a fiber supplement

every day. If you have not had a bowel movement after a couple of days, ask your doctor about taking a mild laxative, such as Milk of Magnesia (1 oz daily).

#### Medicines

- Your doctor will tell you if and when you can restart your medicines. He or she will also give you instructions about taking any new medicines.
- If you take blood thinners, such as warfarin (Coumadin), clopidogrel (Plavix), or aspirin, be sure to talk to your doctor. He or she will tell you if and when to start taking those medicines again. Make sure that you understand exactly what your doctor wants you to do.
- Take pain medicines exactly as directed.
  - If the doctor gave you a prescription medicine for pain, take it as prescribed.
  - If you are not taking a prescription pain medicine, ask your doctor if you can take an over-the-counter medicine.
- Pain medicine may cause constipation. Ask your doctor about taking a stool softener along with your pain medicine. Drink plenty of fluids.
- If your doctor prescribed antibiotics, take them as directed. Do not stop taking them just because you feel better. You need to take the full course of antibiotics.
- If you think your pain medicine is making you sick to your stomach:
  - Take your medicine after meals (unless your doctor has told you not to).

#### Other instructions

- Sit in 3 ½ - 4 inches of warm water (sitz bath) for 15 to 20 minutes 3 times a day and after bowel movements. Then pat the area dry. Do this as long as you have pain in your anal area. You may add ¼ cup of Epsom Salt.
- Support your feet with a small step stool when you sit on the toilet. This helps flex your hips and places your pelvis in a squatting position. This can make bowel movements easier after surgery.
- Use baby wipes or medicated pads, such as Tucks, instead of toilet paper after a bowel movement. These products do not irritate the anus.
- Avoid using soaps with fragrance that can irritate the site.