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Leaving hospital following a hysterectomy

This leaflet aims to help you during your recovery from surgery by providing some useful information and advice.

Wishing you a speedy recovery

Your next appointment:

A 6 week post-operative appointment has already been made by Sandra .Please make sure that you know when that is .If you are unsure, ask the hospital staff to phone my rooms to confirm the date.If you have not yet received a follow-up appointment ,please contact Sandra on 07 43311545.

Will I have pain?

You will feel some mild to moderate discomfort in your abdomen and occasional shoulder tip pain . You may take painkillers such as paracetamol and ibuprofen which you can purchase from any pharmacy, following the instructions on the packet. Please take the pain killers as prescribed in hospital. Please take them regularly for at least one week after discharge from hospital .Taking pain painkillers to reduce your pain will enable you to move around – all of which will speed up your recovery and help to prevent the formation of blood clots in your legs and lungs.

PS:Your pain should improve everyday.
Should you feel unwell or experience worsening severe tummy pain please inform me or your GP immediately.

What about my stitches?

I use sutures which are soluble and do not need to be removed . Your wounds will be covered by “Skin Glue” which form a transparent layer over the wound.This also makes it water resistant so you can shower straight away.The skin glue will become itchy and starting to peel off from the 2nd -3rd week onwards .If the wound site becomes

red and sore, please contact our rooms, or your GP as you may need local Bactroban ointment or more.

How do I look after my wounds?

Clean water is good for the surgical wound and does not cause harm. However do not soak the wounds in water and shower instead of having a bath. Do not use any anti septics to clean the wounds. Do not swim before 3-4 weeks .Wear loose clothing.

Will I have vaginal discharge or bleeding after surgery?

It is quite normal to have vaginal discharge as part of the healing process and this can vary from dark red/brown to a slight yellowish colour.It can last for up to 6 weeks. If the bleeding becomes heavy, bright red or if the discharge is smelly, then contact your GP or my rooms as this could be a sign of infection.

When will my bladder and bowel function return to normal?

You may have trouble opening your bowels, feel bloated or have some discomfort due to wind for the first few days after the operation – this is due to the surgery and because you are less mobile, may not be eating your usual diet and may be taking certain pain killing medication which can cause constipation. Your bowel habits should return to normal in time but eating fresh fruit, vegetables, fibre, drinking plenty of fluids and becoming more mobile as the days go on will help. If you have not opened your bowels within a

week of surgery then your local chemist can recommend a mild laxative to help eg. Movicol ,Coloxyl ,Lactulose etc .
If emptying your bladder causes a burning sensation, please see your nearest GP for a urine test . You may have acquired a urinary tract infection (UTI).

Formation of blood clots :

There is a small risk of blood clots forming in the veins in your legs and pelvis (deep vein thrombosis) after any operation. These clots can travel to the lungs (pulmonary embolism) which could be serious. Contact your GP if you experience a painful red swollen calve or lower leg. You can reduce the risk of clots by being as mobile as you can as early as you can ,doing basic leg exercises when you are resting. Wear your TEDS stockings until you return back to normal mobility.

When can I restart a sexual relationship?

You can resume sexual intercourse at around six weeks following your surgery if you feel comfortable.

Driving:

You should assess whether you can comfortably sit in the car, work the controls, wear a seatbelt, look over your shoulder, make an emergency stop, and be free from the effects of sedating medications when considering resuming driving after surgery.The period of recovery after surgery is variable.Insurance companies are generally guided by medical advice regarding driving. Women should enquire from their insurance companies whether there are any policy exclusions.

Flying:

All air lines will require a certificate clearing you for flying. Please contact Sandra (07)43311545 for a certificate.

How much can I do around the house?

When you first get home you may feel tired and the simplest task may exhaust you. It is important to be as active as possible, but to get adequate rest if tired.The sutures used for your operation will hold all structures together regardless of lifting, straining or exercise.
You will find out by yourself how much physical exercise/housework you tolerate well. The amount of exercise/housework you can do will increase with time.

When can I go back to work?

The time needed off work will be determined by the type of work you do (office or manual) and by how urgent you have to be back at work. You will normally need between two to four weeks for Laparoscopic and 4-6 weeks for an open hysterectomy. Please discuss your needs for a sickness certificate with me or Sandra on 07 43311545.

Will I still need to have a cervical screening test /Papsmear?

If you had a hysterectomy for benign (non-cancerous) reasons, you will NOT need PAP smears any longer.

If you had a hysterectomy for a pre-cancer, Dr Swanepoel will outline the frequency of future smears.

If you had a Sub-total hysterectomy(where the cervix is not removed) then you should continue to have PAP smears as guided by the national screening program.

I've had a hysterectomy but still have my ovaries – how will this affect me?

Your ovaries will continue to function as before .Your body absorbs the eggs produced by your ovaries; this will not affect you in any way.

My ovaries have been removed how does this affect me?

If you had periods prior to your surgery and if both your ovaries had to be removed at surgery, you will become menopausal. This means that the hormone production from the ovaries and the hormone levels will drop immediately and menopausal symptoms (e.g., hot flushes) could develop. You may wish to try Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) and you can discuss this with Dr Swanepoel.

If you were menopausal before your surgery your hormone levels would not change and no further medication would be required.

Will there be an empty space where my womb was?

No. Your internal organs will settle in to fill any space left after the operation.

I feel tearful – is this normal?

You may experience some 'blue' days after major surgery. Wanting to do more than your body will allow may leave you feeling low and frustrated. This is normal and will settle down in time. If not then do make an appointment to see your GP.

Some women will take longer than others to recover, both physically and mentally, but this does not automatically mean anything is wrong. Just remember to pace your recovery and look forward to returning to normal life. Remember, every woman's experience is different.

If there is anything you don't understand or you need further advice or reassurance on, then please feel free to contact Dr Swanepoel's rooms on 07-43311545 or after hours: If you had your surgery at the Mater Hospital 07 41539428 or Friendlies Society Private Hospital 07 43311000.

Should you feel unwell after being discharged from hospital, please contact my rooms on (07) 43311545 or after hours :The Mater hospital (07) 41539428 or Friendlies Society Private Hospital (07) 43311000.

For any medical emergency call 000.

The Bundaberg Base Hospital is the only hospital that offers a 24 hours emergency department .Contact nr (07) 41502222

I wish you a speedy recovery and I am looking forward to seeing you again at the 6 weeks post-surgical visit.

Dr Harrie Swanepoel.

