TOTONCHI
PLASTIC SURGERY

Care after Abdominal Panniculectomy

This page contains answers to frequently asked questions regarding your care after an abdominal panniculectomy. This information will help you remember the instructions given to you after surgery.

Appearance:

- You will have mild bruising and swelling of the abdominal skin.
- You will have an incision that extends from hip to hip in the bikini area. You may also have an incision around the umbilicus if you had an abdominoplasty added to your panniculectomy procedure.
- There may be a “ruffled” appearance to the closure, which is normal and will flatten with time.
- If you had full abdominal contouring in addition to the panniculectomy, it will be difficult to stand up straight for several days, and your abdomen will feel tight.
- The contour of your abdomen will not take its final shape for several weeks after the surgery.
- We recommend that you wear an abdominal support garment for 6 weeks following your surgery, removing the garment only for bathing
- Most patients find that a spandex or Lycra waist and tummy shaping garment are most comfortable to wear as a second stage garment, around 4 weeks post op.

Activity/Bathing/Sleeping:

- Many patients find it easier to sleep in a recliner for a few days after the surgery. We encourage sleeping elevated for 1 week after surgery.
- It will be difficult to stand up straight for several days
- Walk every day, but have someone assist you the first couple days
- Do not lift over 5 lbs. or participate in heavy exercise for 6 weeks after surgery.
- Depending on the type of work you do, you should be able to return to your job in 4-6 weeks or as soon as you are comfortable.
- If your job does not require heavy activity, you should be able to go back in 3-4 weeks.
- Hernia repair patients are to check with their hernia surgeon regarding additional restrictions
- You generally should be able to drive about seven to ten days after surgery, if you feel comfortable. **You should never drive if you are still taking any prescription pain medication.**
- You can sponge bathe, but please **do not shower until post op day 5. After showering,**

We are always available if you have any questions, please call 440-461-7999.

Drain/Incision Care:

- Your drains are held in place with stitches to your skin and should always be supported to avoid pulling on the drain. The easiest method is to safety pin the drain bulb to your abdominal binder or use the Velcro band provided.
- Monitor your drain output daily and record on the sheet given at your pre-operative appointment. Please bring the drain sheet to your post op appointments.
- The “How to care for your drain” pamphlet has more detailed information.
- Drains are generally removed within 7 to 10 days after your surgery.
- Clean your incisions with a Q-tip and warm water, then apply bacitracin to your incisions at least twice a day.
- After 1 week, please switch from bacitracin to Aquaphor or moisturizing lotion.
- Avoid sun exposure to the incision.
- Silicone scar gel can be applied to the scar at 5 weeks post-op. This will help aid the scar in healing.

Diet:

- We recommend a diet consisting of high protein and easily digestible foods (i.e. toast, rice, bananas, eggs, chicken, oatmeal, protein shakes, etc.)
- Do not drink alcohol for seven days after your surgery or while taking narcotic pain medicines
- Limit your salt intake to help decrease swelling.
- Please refer to the “Medications and Foods to Avoid” List provided in your Pre-Surgical email sent

Medication:

- We will prescribe a pain medication for you to take after your surgery. Follow the directions on the bottle for their use. The pain medication may make you feel drowsy
- Most patients experience discomfort for approximately 5 to 7 days, sometimes a little longer.
- A few days after surgery most patients will find that Tylenol will take care of the discomfort
- Do not use aspirin, ibuprofen (Motrin) or other NSAID medication for seven days after the surgery.

Post-Operative Appointments:

- You will normally be seen in the office within one week of your surgery
- Then at about two weeks, four weeks, six weeks, three months, and six months after surgery to monitor healing. Additional appointments may be necessary.

Recommended Supplies:

- Gauze, Q-tips, Bacitracin, and Aquaphor
- Extra Pillows for comfort
- Ice packs

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Post-Operative Concerns: Urgent problems after abdominoplasty do not occur often. Please review the following complications that may require a change in your post-operative care:

- **Hematoma** (blood collecting under your incisions)
  The warning signs are:
  - Severe pain that does not respond to medication
  - Significant swelling in your abdomen or localized burning
  - Excessive or growing bruising
- **Infection** is rare following abdominoplasty surgery. It is normal to have a small amount of drainage from the incisions and around your belly button for a few days. Signs of infection are:
  - Increased temperature
  - Increasing drainage from the incisions
  - Increasing redness around the incisions
- **Leg swelling** (with or without associated pain) may indicate a problem with the vein circulation in your leg(s). Although some swelling is to be expected due to your surgery, intravenous fluids given to you during the surgery, and your decreased level of activity, this swelling is normally mild, painless, and affects both legs evenly. If you have a large amount of leg swelling (either one or both legs), or if you experience pain in your legs, contact the office immediately.
- **Breathing problems** after abdominoplasty are rare but can be a serious complication. If you develop any chest and/or back pain or shortness of breath, you must contact my office or be seen in the nearest emergency medical facility.
- **Medication reactions** may occur with the drugs prescribed for you. If you develop a skin rash, itching, vomiting, or diarrhea, stop taking your medication and contact my office.

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