

Patient
Information

Advice for when you go home after having gynaecological surgery

Your operation details:

Ward:

Discharge

You may have some discomfort when you leave hospital. You will be given pain relief medication to take home and we recommend that you take this regularly.

At home

The following can help with your recovery:

- You may feel weak or tired for some time, so try to rest more than usual.

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Gynaecology

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- Please continue to wash as normal, washing wounds with plain water. If you would like to have a bath please discuss with your clinical nurse specialist.
- Avoid wearing tight clothing and using lotions around the wound area.
- Avoid swimming and using tampons for 6 to 8 weeks, to help to prevent any infections.
- It is normal to experience a pulling feeling around the area of the surgery for some time as your wound heals.
- You will have a brownish vaginal discharge at first, this is normal. If the discharge gets heavier, foul smelling or you have bright red bleeding, you should contact your GP or specialist nurse for advice.
- If you still have periods, your next period may be early or late, as surgery can upset your normal cycle.
- If you have stitches, these will dissolve on their own.
- If your wound is closed with staples, then please contact your GP's surgery to make an appointment to have them removed 10 days after your operation.

Vulval surgery

The stitches used for this surgery are dissolvable but can become tight. The stitches can be removed by your GP surgery after 10 days if the wound has healed.

- If you have discomfort and stinging when passing urine, pouring a jug of lukewarm water over the wound, while sitting on the toilet, can help.

It is common that you may get an infection and need antibiotics. If you have any redness, heat or an offensive smelling discharge, please contact your GP for advice.

Activity

You are still at risk of developing blood clots in your veins as you recover from your operation. Regular and gentle exercise is recommended.

- Walking is good and can be increased each day.
- Stair-climbing is fine once you feel ready.

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- Try not to lift anything heavier than a 2 litre bottle of water. This can be increased after 4 weeks. Always carry items close to your body.
- You should not do housework or carry heavy shopping bags for the first 4 weeks if possible.

When can I go back to work?

Depending on your job, you should stay off work for 2 to 6 weeks. Discuss this with your consultant or GP as this can vary and be personalised.

When can I drive?

You can travel as a passenger, but if going long distances, make sure you stretch your legs regularly.

You should not drive until you feel able to do an emergency stop easily and you are not taking regular pain relief. This is usually about 6 weeks.

What about my sex life?

We advise you not to have intercourse for 6 weeks to allow healing.

It may be some months before you begin to enjoy sex again. Talk to your partner, if you have one, and be as honest as you can about what you want and do not want until you feel ready. We can offer psychological support if you need it.

Emotions

It is normal to feel emotional after having gynaecological surgery. Some patients say they feel down, while others are relieved it is over and they can get back to normal. Be assured that things should settle down over a course of time, if it doesn't then please contact your GP.

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Try to eat a balanced variety of foods with plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables as this will help with the healing process. Drink at least 2 litres of water (or non-sugary drinks) every day.

Avoid fatty foods, excessive alcohol, cakes and sweets to help you not put on weight while you are less active.

Constipation

Pain relief medication, reduced activity, having an operation and changes in appetite, can all affect your bowels. If you get constipated, increase your fluid intake and eat a high fibre diet such as wholemeal bread, bran flakes, beans and pulses.

If you have not moved your bowels for 3 days, you should contact your GP.

Will I need hormone replacement therapy (HRT)?

HRT will have been discussed with you before your surgery and will depend on your age and diagnosis.

If you have the menopause before surgery, the need for HRT will not change.

If you are given HRT, you will have a month's supply to take home. You can ask your GP for repeat prescriptions. Any concerns can be discussed with the gynaecology team or your GP.

Contact your GP if you experience any of the following or 111 if out of hours:

- Severe pain not controlled by pain relief medication
- Fever, shaking or chills
- Wound infection; increased redness, swelling, tenderness, warmth or drainage from the wound
- Offensive smelling discharge
- Excess bleeding
- Continual vomiting and not being able to eat or drink anything

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- Severe pain in your calf or leg, sudden shortness of breath or chest pain
- Problems passing urine or any other urinary problems.

Contact information

If you have any concerns or questions after your surgery, contact your Gynaecology Cancer Clinical Nurse Specialist on the number below or your GP:

Jessica Cook

Tel: 0300 422 4047

Lisa Peck

Tel: 0300 422 3181

Louise Dangerfield

Tel: 0300 422 2366

If we cannot take your call, please leave a message with your name, date of birth and contact number and the right person will get back to you as soon as possible.

Please be advised we do not work weekends, any concerns please call the out of hours GP on 111 if appropriate.

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