

**Getting home from hospital is the first step in making a speedy recovery. Most patients have a number of questions once they arrive home and hopefully most of these will be answered in this information card. I am looking forward to seeing you in when you come for your post-operative visit.**

**Your next appointment:** Please make sure you have arranged a follow-up appointment. This should be 1-2 weeks after a laparoscopic procedure and 4-6 weeks after vaginal hysterectomies and any other surgery. If you have not received a follow up appointment please contact my practice manager on (02)67661658 between 8.30 am to 4.30 pm weekdays.

**Discharge medication:** Please take the pain relief that is given to you on discharge. Please take them regularly for at least one week after discharge from hospital as it is a much easier to maintain a pain free state than to fight pain.

**Driving:** While you could be feeling well enough to drive after your operation in the event of an accident your insurer could question your fitness to drive (due to pain or whilst on pain relief) and therefore it is recommended not to drive for two weeks after surgery. Please contact our office for any further information.

**Flying:** All airlines will require a certificate clearing you for flying. Please contact my practice manager for a certificate.

**Menopause:** If you had periods prior to your surgery and if both of your ovaries had been removed you will become menopausal. This

means that your hormone production from your ovaries ceases and the hormone levels drop immediately and menopausal symptoms (e.g. hot flushes) could develop. You may wish to try Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) which often is given as a daily tablet. I try to prescribe the lowest possible dose for one year as I am aware of the possible side effects of HRT if used long term. If you were menopausal before your surgery your hormone levels would not change and no further medication would be required.

**Bladder and bowel function:** If emptying your bladder causes a burning sensation please see your GP for a urine test and antibiotic medication. You may have a urinary tract infection. For weeks to months your bowel function could be impaired as a result of your recent surgery. Please try natural fibre (beans, lentils or pair and prune juices) or natural yoghurt first rather than laxatives.

**Vaginal discharge:** After a hysterectomy the vagina has been sewn with stitches. As a sign of wound healing a slight vaginal discharge is normal for up to six weeks and can even be blood stained. Should your discharge become offensive please contact our rooms or your GP who will prescribe antibiotics for a presumed local infection.

**Sexual intercourse and swimming/full bath after your hysterectomy or vaginal surgery:** I recommend abstaining from sexual intercourse and a full bath for 4-6 weeks after your surgery

otherwise the vagina could become infected and you may require antibiotics.

**Hygiene:** Clean water is good for your surgical wound and does not cause harm. I recommend NOT using soaps or cream into your wound as this could cause an infection. You may use creams once the wounds have completely healed.

**Exercise:** The sutures used for your operation will hold all structures together regardless of lifting, straining or exercise. However, if you overdo it you will feel sore which is a sign that you have done too much and you need to relax more. You will find out by yourself how much physical exercise you can tolerate. The amount of exercise you can do will increase with time. Regular exercise is very important for your health and I recommend that you return to your usual routines as soon as possible. This is also similar for physical housework. You may need to increase this slowly before returning to your pre-surgical level of housework.

**PAP smear:** If you had a hysterectomy for a cervical abnormality (CIN 1-3) you will be advised regarding your PAP smears at your next consult. If you had a hysterectomy for any other reasons you will not require any further PAP smears.

**Back to work:** The time needed off work will depend on the type of duties you do (office or manual) and how urgently you are required to return to your workplace. Medical certificates are available from my practice manager. Ph: (02)67661958.

**Sutures:** I use sutures which do not need to be removed and which have shown to reveal excellent cosmetic results in studies. These sutures could slightly stick out of the skin for a couple of weeks. They will finally become loose and fall out by themselves. If the wound site becomes red and sore please contact my rooms, your GP or the emergency rooms at your nearest hospital.

**Should you feel unwell after being discharged from hospital please contact my rooms on (02) 67661958. If there are any problems I want to be informed first and only when I know there is a problem can I help find a solution. Sometimes another qualified doctor who I completely trust may be involved in your care should I not be available.**

With the very best wishes

*Dr Elizabeth Varughese*