

Getting home from hospital is the first step to making a speedy recovery. Here are a few frequently asked questions answered.

Your next appointment: In the first week after your surgery, my staff will be in touch with you to check on your recovery. A post operative appointment will be offered. It is recommended that you attend the post op consultation to discuss findings at surgery, results of histopathology and planning future management of your condition if required. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or concerns My team will gladly assist you.

Discharge medications: I prefer to discharge my patients on pain relief medications and recommend that they are taken regularly for 5-7 days. During this time I also recommend regular use of laxatives as you may find that constipation is an issue. Most of your routine medications can be restarted after surgery but some meds such as blood thinners may be started later. I will give specific instructions regarding this.

Driving: You may feel well enough to drive a few days after surgery, however, your insurer could question your fitness to drive due to pain or influence of strong painkillers. It is therefore recommended not to drive for 1-2 weeks after laparoscopic surgery and 4-6 weeks after open surgery.

Flying: Each airline has its own regulation on flying after surgery. Please check with your airlines and contact my rooms if you require a clearance certificate.

Menopause: If your ovaries have been removed at surgery you can experience menopausal symptoms irrespective of your menopausal state. A short course of estrogen replacement (HRT) will help to tide over these symptoms. If you had not attained menopause prior to surgical removal of your ovaries, it is recommended that you start ERT and stay on it till the natural age of menopause (usually around 51yrs).

Bladder and Bowel: You could become constipated for weeks to months after surgery. I recommend incorporating regular natural fibre in your diet and if that is not effective you can use laxatives. Your bladder functions could also be affected particularly if surgery involved the bladder or tissues close to the bladder. I recommend double voiding for the first 7-10 days after surgery. The nurse looking after you, while in hospital will teach you double voiding techniques. If you develop burning sensation when passing urine, you could have a urinary tract infection. Please contact my rooms or your GP for treatment.

Vaginal discharge: If you have had a hysterectomy or vaginal surgery, you will have stitches in the vagina that take up to 12 weeks to be completely dissolved. During this time you will experience vaginal discharge and mild bleeding (mostly spotting or blood staining on wiping). If you experience bright bleeding during your postoperative period (up to 8 weeks), please contact my rooms at the earliest or alternatively present to your GP or Emergency services.

Sexual intercourse, swimming and bath: I recommend that all these activities are avoided for up to 8 weeks after surgery that involves stitches in the vagina. This is to allow the vagina to heal completely. If you did not have stitches in the vagina, you can resume as soon as you are ready.

Hygiene: Your dressings can come off three days after surgery. If you have a glue covering your wounds, you do not need to do anything as this glue will peel off after a few weeks. I encourage you to wash the wound with water and pat it dry. Please do not apply any creams or lotions on the wound. The stitches I use are dissolvable and sometimes you may feel it poking out. Examine regularly for any redness or swelling. Please contact my rooms if you have any concerns.

Exercise: You can resume most routine activities after 7-10 days. As a rule of thumb, I recommend starting your exercise regime with walking. The amount of exercise will increase with time. Your body will alert you if the exercise is too much. I would recommend avoiding heavy weightlifting (more than 5 Kg). Please discuss with me at your post op visit if you have any queries.

Pap smears: If your PAP smear was abnormal prior to hysterectomy, you will need follow up vault smears annually until you have two consecutive results that are negative. If your PAP smears were normal prior to hysterectomy, you will not require any further smears.

Return to work: This will depend on the type of work you do and surgery that you have had. After a laparoscopic surgery, you can return to office work as soon as you can drive (14 days) and manual work after 6 weeks. If your surgery was open surgery, you can return after 6 weeks, but you have to avoid heavy weightlifting (>5 kg). Most workplaces will require a clearance to work certificate. Please talk to my staff if you require one.

Should you feel unwell after being discharged from hospital, please do not hesitate to reach out.

My staff and I would be more than happy to help. Please contact us on 0267661958. After hours or on weekends, please present to the nearest emergency service. If required, they will contact me.

Best wishes

Dr Elizabeth Varughese