



Santiago Horgan, MD  
Director, Minimally Invasive Surgery

## POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

### Laparoscopic Cholecystectomy

The following is a list of instructions to help you do well with getting better from your surgery. Please read over this material carefully. While instructions may vary from patient to patient, the material should provide you with a general idea of things to do to help you get well after your surgery.

#### Activity

You will likely feel tired for at least 1 week after your surgery. Take your pain medicine as needed in order to stay active, but rest as needed for recovery. Take short walks 2-3 times a day. This will help reduce the risk of blood clots following surgery. You may use the stairs as needed as long as you are not dizzy or weak. Make sure someone is around the first few times you use the stairs or exercise.

#### Driving

Do not drive until you have been seen for your first post-operative clinic office visit. Unless otherwise instructed by us, you may drive after your first visit and when you can react safely in an emergency situation. You **must not** be taking pain medicines stronger than regular Tylenol (acetaminophen) at the time you are driving, nor should you have a great deal of pain, as this will affect your ability to react quickly. **Also: do not take Tylenol #3 and Tylenol at the same time** as Tylenol is in both of them. If you are trying to take yourself off Tylenol #3 by switching to Tylenol, allow 6 hours between doses.

#### Lifting/Coughing

Practice 10 deep breaths every hour and 2 coughs every hour, (for at least 12 hours a day), while awake for the first week after surgery to reduce the risk of lung problems or pneumonia. Do not lift heavy objects (more than 8 pounds) for the first 4 weeks. Also avoid pushing, pulling or abdominal pressure for these first 4 weeks. When coughing, be sure to place a pillow over the incision and gently press inward to reduce the pressure (from coughing) on your incision.

#### Medications

Use your pain medicine as prescribed. Pain medications may cause nausea on an empty stomach so it is recommended you take with food. You may switch to plain Tylenol, as directed by your surgeon after surgery. If you are feeling constipated and have not had a bowel movement by the 4<sup>th</sup> day after surgery, you may take 1 ounce of Milk of Magnesia in the morning. .

## **Incisions**

Your incisions have been closed with dissolvable suture on the inside and a special skin glue over the incision. The skin glue will dissolve so do not attempt to remove it from your skin. You may shower the day after surgery and allow clean, soapy water to run over your incision but do not expose your incisions to soaking in water (i.e. hot tub, bathtub or swimming pools) for the first 6 weeks after surgery. Do not put any ointment or creams over the incisions for the first 6 weeks after surgery or while the incision is open, draining or scabbed.

## **Diet**

You may return to normal food after you go home from your surgery. You may wish to avoid fatty or heavy foods for the first few days, since some of these foods may cause diarrhea or nausea temporarily following surgery.

## **Follow Up**

You should follow up in the clinic 1 week after your surgery and 3 months after your surgery. You may be seen sooner if indicated the surgical team. Please call Dr Horgan's office at (619) 471-0701 to schedule your follow up visits.

## **PRECAUTIONS—When Should I call the Physician?**

*Diarrhea:* Occasional loose bowel movements are not uncommon. However, constant watery diarrhea, especially with fever, can indicate an infection of the bowels.

*Fever with or without cough:* This could be a sign of lung, wound or stomach infection.

*Elevated heart rate:* If your heart rate is more than 100 beats per minute, this could be a sign of infection.

*Sudden shortness of breath and/or chest pain:* This could be related to a heart problem, such as a heart attack, or could be related to a blood clot to the lung (pulmonary embolus) or a lung infection.

*Leg swelling and pain:* Blood clot formation in the leg, particularly if it is on one side, could cause swelling with pain in the calf.

*Passing out:* This could be a sign of low blood pressure, which could be caused by blood loss, low blood sugar or other causes.

*Sudden new stomach pain:* This could be a sign of leakage around your stomach or an infection in your stomach.

*Wound drainage:* gold colored drainage is normal, call however if your incisional drainage is green, brown, has a foul odor, or becomes red and irritated.

**For urgent matters, you may call (858) 657-7000 and ask to have the physician on call for the “silver team” paged. Please remove call block from your phone and refrain from using your phone so that the physician may return your call promptly.**