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## Discharge Instructions for Gastrectomy

You had a gastrectomy. During this surgery, some or all of your stomach was removed. As you heal from surgery, here's what you'll need to know to care for yourself.

### Eating and drinking

- Follow the diet that was prescribed for you in the hospital. Eat pureed foods and liquids for 3 weeks after the surgery.
- Drink liquids in smaller amounts than you used to. This will make it easier for your body to digest liquids. But, it is important that you continue to drink liquids (in small amounts) so that you do not become dehydrated. Some signs of dehydration include dry mouth and urine that is darker or less in amount.
- Eat slowly. Eating too much or too fast will cause nausea and vomiting.
- You may need to not drink liquids at the same time you eat solid food. Space out your meals and drinks.
- Use liquid nutritional supplements recommended by a healthcare provider to make sure you get enough calories.
- Try to eat small, frequent meals when you are eating solids again. Make these meals high in protein and low in carbohydrates.

### Activity

- Your recovery will take several weeks. It is common to feel tired. Rest as needed.
- Walk as often as you feel able. Make sure to walk at least a few times a times a day. Increase your activity slowly over time.
- Don't lift anything heavier than 10 pounds (4.5 kg) until the healthcare provider says it's OK. This is often around 2 weeks.
- Don't do strenuous chores until the healthcare provider says it's OK. This includes vacuuming, yard work, lifting kids, or lifting full bags of garbage.
- Climb stairs slowly and pause after every few steps.
- Don't drive for 2 weeks after surgery, or until it is OK with your healthcare provider.
- Start an exercise program 1 week after discharge. You can benefit from simple activities such as walking on a flat area. Ask your healthcare provider how to get started.
- Ask your healthcare provider when you can expect to return to work.

### Other home care

- Continue the coughing and deep breathing exercises that you learned in the hospital.
- Shower as needed. Don't take baths. Don't go in pools or hot tubs. This helps prevent infection of the incision site. You can do these things when your healthcare provider says it's OK.
- Keep the incision clean and dry. Wash it gently with mild soap and warm water. Then gently pat it dry with a towel.
- Follow all instructions about caring for the dressing over your incisions.
- If there are small white sticky strips on your incision, do not remove them. Let the strips fall off on their own. They should fall off within 2 weeks after you were sent home. If they don't, call your healthcare provider and ask how to remove them.
- Take your medicines in crushed or liquid form for 3 weeks after surgery.

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- Take a chewable vitamin 2 times a day. Ask your healthcare provider if you also need to take a supplement for vitamin B-12.
  - Take all medicines as directed by your healthcare provider.

## **Follow-up care**

Follow up with your healthcare provider, or as advised.

## **When to call your healthcare provider**

Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of these:

- Cloudy or smelly fluid leaking from the incision site
- Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher, or as directed by your healthcare provider
- Shaking chills
- Fast pulse
- Night sweats
- Pain, nausea, or vomiting after you eat
- Diarrhea beyond the first week after discharge
- Pain in your upper back, chest, or left shoulder
- Hiccups that won't stop or that keep coming back
- Confusion, depression, or unusual fatigue
- Signs of bladder infection, such as passing urine a lot, and burning, pain, bleeding, trouble passing urine

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