

Hysterectomy: Returning Home

It'll take some time to heal after a hysterectomy.

It can help to know what to expect and how you can help your body heal and avoid problems.

After open abdominal surgery, most people need around 4 to 6 weeks to recover.

Recovery is faster after vaginal surgery or if your doctor does the surgery with a laparoscope.

For the first few days after surgery, you may have some pain.

If you aren't taking a prescription pain medicine, ask your doctor if you can take an over-the-counter medicine.

If your doctor gave you a prescription medicine for pain, take it as prescribed.

If you're taking pain medicines, it's important not to drive.

Wait until you're feeling better and you no longer need medicine for pain.

Store your prescription pain medicines where no one else can get to them.

When you are done using them, dispose of them quickly and safely.

Your local pharmacy or hospital may have a drop-off site.

For several weeks after surgery, you may notice that your belly is bloated and gassy, and you may also have bleeding and discharge from your vagina.

You may also notice some changes in the flow of your urine and how often you urinate.

You can use pads, but don't use tampons.

Avoid douching, and talk to your doctor about when it's safe to have vaginal sex.

It's okay to shower as soon as you get home, but follow your doctor's instructions on when you can take a bath.

Depending on the type of surgery you had, you may feel tired for several weeks.

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It's important to balance rest and activity.

Give yourself permission to rest or nap.

And ask others to help out at home.

Each day, try to get up and walk around a little more.

Moving is really important.

It helps prevent blood clots, and it can help with constipation, which can be a problem after surgery.

Until you're feeling better, don't move quickly or lift anything heavy.

This includes things like a vacuum cleaner, a heavy bag of any kind, or a child.

Your doctor can tell you when you can expect to get back to your daily activities and routine.

Now, depending on the type of surgery you had, you may have one or more cuts—incisions—in your belly.

If you have a bandage on an incision, you can take it off in 1 to 2 days.

If you have tape strips, you can gently remove them in a week.

After you remove your bandages, you'll need to clean any incisions every day with warm, soapy water in the shower.

To dry an incision, pat it with a clean towel.

If your clothes rub an incision or it oozes fluid, cover it with a gauze bandage.

Then change the bandage every day.

And be sure to watch for problems and talk to your care provider if you have any questions or concerns.

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Problems include things like: increased vaginal bleeding or discharge; new or worse pain in your belly or pelvis; or signs that an incision is infected, such as increased pain, swelling, warmth, or redness; reddish streaks leading from the incision; or a fever.

Also call your doctor or go to the emergency room if you have signs of a blood clot, such as pain in your calf, back of the knee, thigh, or groin, or swelling in your leg or groin.

And call your doctor or go to the emergency room if you have a color change on the skin of your leg or groin.

The skin may be reddish or purplish, depending on your usual skin color.

Now, this may seem like a lot to do, but all these things are important.

They can help you heal and stay out of the hospital.

And remember, if you have any questions, you can always call your doctor.