

Common Occurrences After Surgery

Understanding the normal process of recovery can decrease many problems and concerns. The following are common symptoms of recovery and how to deal with these occurrences.

Nausea. Nausea is common in the first few weeks after surgery. **The usual causes are increased sensitivity to odors, going to fast with foods, increased acid in the stomach, low protein intake and inadequate water intake.** We recommend that you take your acid blocker as prescribed. Patients may wait until they are really thirsty or hungry which will cause them take to large of a bite or go too fast. If you become nauseated, think about what you did. Ask yourself: Did I eat too much? Did I chew my food thoroughly? Did I eat too big of a bite?

Sinus drainage (mucus) can also cause nausea. If you find that you have sinus drainage, go to the local pharmacy and purchase Claritin® or the Primary MD office so that we can prescribe medication to alleviate the drainage.

Odors after surgery can be a bit overwhelming at times. After surgery you can become highly sensitive to odors. This is temporary and will improve over time. We recommend purchasing spearmint or peppermint oil, place a few drops in a handkerchief and carry it with you.

Vomiting. Vomiting is usually caused by eating too quickly or by over-eating. You will feel full quickly for about three months after surgery. Take your time, take small bites and chew your food well. In the beginning, **a few bites will be all that you will be able to tolerate at one time.** Please call the office if you vomit for more than one day. Vomiting can lead to dehydration. This can be a serious issue and will need to be resolved. ***For band patients only:*** Vomiting can cause band slippage. Please be very attentive to your stomach when eating. You will feel full quickly after adjustable gastric banding. Take your time, take small bites and chew your food well. If you vomit once, go back to liquids for 2 days to allow swelling to subside. Please call the office if you vomit for more than one day or if you experience **vomiting with pain. Vomiting can lead to dehydration and band slippage.** This can be a serious issue and will need to be resolved.

Hair Loss. Hair loss is common with rapid weight loss. The hair loss is temporary and reversible. It usually begins about the three- month mark after surgery and lasts until about the nine- month mark. Be certain that you are taking in 60-80 grams of protein a day. Some patients will take hair, skin and nails supplements that you may purchase over the counter. Most patients that experience hair loss find that cutting the hair shorter makes the hair loss less noticeable. We do not recommend perms or coloring in this time period as it can further create stress to the hair. Use a gentle shampoo such as Johnson's Baby Shampoo®.

Bowel Activity. It will take time for the bowel to adapt to all of the changes that surgery creates. Constipation can occur due to decrease in intake. Drink your water. If you experience loose stools, they are usually caused by high fatty foods and lactose intolerance. Notice your dietary habits and make the necessary changes. **You may reduce gas by watching your diet.**

Hydration. Keeping your system hydrated after weight loss surgery may be difficult as first. Make sure that you drink at least 1-2 liters of fluid a day. Take water with you everywhere you go. You should sip water all day long. This will prevent dehydration. Monitor your urine. If it is dark, increase your water intake

Lactose Intolerance. Many patients who tolerated milk products before surgery find that after bariatric surgery that milk products cause abdominal cramping, nausea and diarrhea. This occurs because of the stress to the bowel created by surgery itself. Lactose is a sugar found in milk products and requires a particular enzyme found in the intestine. The intolerance of lactose can be treated with Lactaid, an over the counter tablet that patients may take prior to eating milk products.

Dumping Syndrome. *For Gastric Bypass patients only:* Your “new” pathway for food intake involves the emptying of the foods into the small intestine. This pathway is created to decrease the body’s ability to tolerate foods high in concentrated sugars whereby decreasing the calorie intake. Sweating, weakness, heart racing, and cramping abdominal pain characterize dumping syndrome. Rapid emptying from the stomach into the small intestine is the cause. Most patients state that it feels terrible and will simply have to lie down until the feeling passes.

Numbness. Nerves to the skin are sometimes cut with surgery. It is normal to experience numbness at the incision site. Sensation at those areas will gradually return with time.

Numbness in Legs. Some patients will occasionally experience upper, lateral thigh numbness/tingling within the first 2 months after surgery. This sensation is called neuralgia parasthetica. It occurs due to the extensive pressure that has been placed on the nerve endings from the excess weight and the belt from the operating table. The sensation will correct itself over time.

Decreased Energy. It is normal to feel tired after surgery. You must keep in mind that you have just undergone major surgery. This decreased energy can last for 2 months. You must work at re-building your stamina. Be sure to stay hydrated. If you are on blood pressure medication or diabetic medication, make a follow up appointment with your physician, as you will more than likely need an adjustment on those medications.

Bruising/Swelling. Moderate bruising and swelling are expected after surgery. If the condition becomes severe, please call the office.

Your Scar. It is normal for the scar to be red or dark pink. Scars are red due to the fact that blood vessels are still working in the healing process. It takes the scar about one year to heal completely; therefore, we ask that you keep the scar covered while tanning. You may also rub the scar (once healed from scabs) with vitamin E or an over the counter cream that reduces the appearance of the scar such as Mederma®.

Hernia. Hernias can occur with any abdominal surgery. If you notice a bulge under your skin at or close to the incision site, please call the office to schedule an appointment.

Excess Skin. As weight is lost, patients may notice excess skin folds and wrinkles. This can be noticed on the abdomen, neck, arms, thighs and face. The skin may be removed by a plastic surgeon when the weight has stabilized (about 18-24 months).

Kidney Stones. Some patients develop calcium containing kidney stones (calcium-oxalate stones) following weight loss surgery. Although your primary care physician may advise you to discontinue calcium supplements, you should not. You need to not only continue taking your calcium citrate, you need to add additional calcium in the form of calcium carbonate (Tums®).

Add: 500 mg of calcium carbonate twice a day. Your calcium citrate and calcium carbonate should not be taken together. Wait at least one hour between doses.

