

## **THE FERTILITY CENTER OF OREGON**

590 Country Club Parkway, Suite A Eugene, Oregon 97401 (541) 683-1559

Douglas Austin, M.D. Lesa Hill, P.A.-C. Sue Armstrong, C.N.M. Jeannie Merrick, R.N., N.P.

### **POSTOPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS FOR MAJOR SURGERY**

**ACTIVITY:** For the first few days at home, you should continue resting as you have in the hospital. Walking is important to strengthen muscles and help bowel habits return to normal. After a few days, you may start slowly increasing your activities so that you get back to normal in 2-3 weeks. Going out to dinner, visiting friends, driving a car, etc. can be done as soon as you are off pain medications and feeling up to it. You will experience ups and downs (good and bad days) for several weeks and should rest more if you feel tired. etc. Each person recovers at their own rate and you can return to work or school (except strenuous activity) as soon as you feel ready.

**EXERCISE:** You may begin gentle stretching and mild exercises 7-10 days after you leave the hospital. It is important to start slowly with all exercise and activity and build back to normal over a period of several weeks. Heavy lifting, vigorous exercise, moving, etc. may put too much pressure on your incisions and should be avoided for at least 4-6 weeks.

**DIET:** You may resume your regular diet as soon as you get home. It is important to avoid spicy foods or other items which might normally cause you problems for 2 weeks or more. Constipation can be a problem after a major surgery and should be prevented by eating those foods which you know have helped this problem in the past (examples include prunes and other fruit, bran cereal, etc.) If a laxative is necessary, Milk of Magnesia may be taken as two tablespoons, up to 2-3 times a day (too much can cause mild diarrhea). Dialose is a good nonprescription stool softener and lubricant. A Fleet enema may be used if necessary and also can be purchased at a pharmacy without a prescription. Alcohol in moderation may be taken but should not be used at the same time as pain medications. It is important to drink plenty of liquids during recovery from surgery.

**SEXUAL ACTIVITIES:** If you have had a hysterectomy or vaginal surgery, it is important not to insert anything into the vagina for 4-6 weeks or until advised by your doctor. This includes tampons, douches, and sexual intercourse. Vaginal incisions take longer to heal because of the moist environment. After other major surgery, you may resume sexual activities as soon as you feel comfortable and it is not painful.

**INCISIONS:** Abdominal incisions may have small paper strips ("Steri-Strips") over the wound. You may remove these in the shower with soapy water one week after hospital discharge. All sutures are dissolving and do not need to be removed. You should contact your doctor if you notice increasing redness, swelling, and pain around the incision as this may indicate a possible infection.

**PAIN MEDICATIONS:** You will usually be given a prescription for pain pills when you leave the hospital. Most pain medications contain narcotics which can have significant side effects including constipation, nightmares, dizziness, ringing in your ears, drowsiness, and impaired reflexes. You should never drive a car, operate any machine, etc. when taking pain pills. We recommend that you begin substituting extra-strength Tylenol or Advil with a pain pill and then eventually instead of pain pills as soon as you can as it is better for you to discontinue narcotic pain pills as soon as possible after surgery.

**PROBLEMS:** Increasing pain, nausea, heavy bleeding, or temperature over 100.5 may indicate infection or other problems and you should call the office without delay (24 hour number). A brownish vaginal discharge and light to moderate bleeding may occur on and off for several weeks after surgery. Sutures may dissolve after 3-4 weeks and produce bright bleeding for 2-3 hours which should not be alarming. It is not unusual that one side of your incision may be more painful than the other as long as it is not swollen and red or otherwise abnormal in appearance. Numbness around your incisions is normal after surgery and will improve slowly over several weeks.

**RETURN APPOINTMENT:** Please make an appointment to see your doctor for a 2 week postoperative examination to make sure everything is returning to normal. Questions and further instructions are also discussed at this time.