

Colorectal Department

Going Home Following Colorectal Surgery

You have now recovered enough from your operation to start thinking about going home. The aim of this information is to help you to overcome any concerns you may have about going home.

Before you are discharged, there are a few things that the team caring for you will want to be sure of:

- That all of your wounds are healing properly
- That you are eating and drinking sufficiently
- That you are managing to look after yourself.

If you have concerns about any aspect of your recovery, including those above, please speak to a member of the team.

On the day of discharge you will be given a letter from the ward nurses. A copy of this letter will be sent to your GP. This letter has information about your medication, your outpatient appointments and includes a section about any referrals that may have been made for you, such as with District Nurses.

Rest, activity and exercise

Once you are home you may find that you feel tired and lethargic and some people feel in a low mood for two to three days. This tiredness may last for several weeks and is quite normal after this kind of surgery. You and your body need time to re-adjust after your operation.

Listen to your body and be aware of your limitations.

Exercise should be taken in small amounts to begin with. Alternate periods of rest and activity so that you do not overdo it. Gradually increase your



Patient Information

level of exercise until your activity level returns to normal.

Medication

If you require medication, this will be discussed with you and you will be given a seven day supply before you leave hospital.

Pain and discomfort

It is normal to have some pain around the wound after your return home, how much pain will vary with each individual patient. You will be given some pain killers to take home with you. Take these as directed and if necessary obtain a repeat prescription from your GP.

Wounds and stitches

Not all patients will have stitches that need removing. If you have stitches these are normally removed 10 days after your operation. If you are discharged with stitches in, arrangements will be made for the GP practice nurse to remove them.

Your wound is often swollen and bruised for a few weeks. It may also feel hard and firm due to the stitches in the deep tissue, but this will soften after several weeks. There may be an area of numbness below the scar, this soon disappears.

Please check your wound regularly and contact your GP if you experience any of the following:

- Increased pain or tenderness
- Increased swelling, oozing or opening of the wound
- Redness or warmth around the wound
- If you have a temperature of above 38 degrees C

Bathing

You may have a bath or shower as you would normally, even with your stitches. Pat the wound as dry as possible and avoid using talcum powder until the stitches are removed.

Patient Information

Diet

You can eat normally unless your doctor advises otherwise. Eat whatever appeals to you but try and eat a well balanced diet, aiming for small regular meals. Try not to miss meals or eat too much rich fatty foods.

If any particular food does seem to cause problems just stop eating it for a while then try again at a later date.

Vegetables, fruits and drinking plenty of fluid will help to prevent constipation.

Alcohol is fine in moderation but large quantities of beer or lager can produce wind and loose motions. Fizzy drinks can also produce wind and we advise that you avoid these for a few days.

For dietary information relevant to your specific surgery, speak to your Colorectal Specialist Nurse.

Returning to work

Everyone is an individual and the recovery from surgery will vary from person to person. Generally we would advise you to stay off work for about three months, but it could be a little longer depending on the type of work you do. Ask your surgeon or GP for advice.

Lifting

You should only carry things which can be easily lifted in one hand for up to three months after your operation.

Driving

It is advisable **not to drive for approximately three to four weeks** after your operation. To make sure it is safe to drive after this time, sit in a stationary car and practice an emergency stop by stamping on the brake pedal. If you have no discomfort in the wound area then you should be all right to drive.

Sexual Activity

Whenever you feel comfortable enough to do so you may resume your sexual activity, but take things gradually – it will take time before you recover. If you have any problems or particular worries do not hesitate to discuss these with your consultant, GP, or Colorectal Specialist Nurse.

Patient Information

Patients with a stoma

Whilst you are in hospital, the Colorectal Specialist Nurse will teach you how to care for your stoma and visit you at home following discharge from hospital.

Follow-up hospital appointment

After your operation your surgeon, or one of their team, will want to see you again in the outpatient clinic. This appointment will be sent to you and any other referrals to other specialists will also be sent.

Support once you are home

When you leave hospital you may feel anxious or concerned; this is normal. If you are worried, need information or are not sure about something related to your operation, please contact your Colorectal Specialist Nurse who will be happy to answer your queries.

Contact numbers for further information:

Colorectal Specialist Nurses

Abby Barnwell, Sarah Taylor 024 7696 5617

Helen Taylor 024 7696 5616

Katrina Turner, Sarah Thompson 024 7696 5825

Claire Jackson, Debbie Mulhern,
Caroline Ling 024 7696 5753

Local services

Age UK Coventry Age UK Warwickshire		024 7623 1999 01926 458100
Bowel Screening Unit		01788 545166/667737
Cancer Information Centre	Main Entrance	024 7696 6052

Patient Information

	UHCW	
Health Information Centre	Main Entrance UHCW	024 7696 6051
Coventry Macmillan Care Team	Hospital Community	024 7696 5498 024 7623 7001
Rugby Macmillan Care Team.	Community	01788 555119
GUT (Cancer Support Group for Coventry & Warwickshire)		024 7696 6475
Hospital Chaplaincy	Hospital	024 7696 7515
Bowel Clinical Trials Nurse	Hospital	024 7696 7151
Specialist Genetic Nurse	Hospital	024 7696 4000
Surgical Counselling Service	Hospital	024 7696 6188
Oncology Counselling Service	Hospital	024 7696 7290
Complimentary Therapies	Hospital	024 7696 7290
Psychosexual Therapy	Hospital	024 7696 7290
Citizens Advice Bureau	Coventry Rugby	024 7625 2050 (appointment only) 0844 855 2322
Coventry Carers Centre	Support for carers	024 7663 2972
Guideposts Trust	Support for carers	024 7638 5888

Also available at University Hospital:

Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Dietitian Service, Social Services

Patient Information

National contact numbers

Association of Coloproctology for Great Britain and Ireland	www.acpgbi.org.uk/patients/
Beating Bowel Cancer	020 8892 5256 0845 0719 301 (Helpline) www.beatingbowelcancer.org
National Cancer Institute (American)	www.cancer.gov
Bowel Cancer UK	020 7381 9711
Colostomy Association	0800 328 4257 www.colostomyassociation.org.uk/
CORE (The Digestive Disorders Foundation)	020 7486 0341 www.corecharity.org.uk
The Ileostomy & Internal Pouch Support Group (IA)	0800 018 4724 www.the-ia.org.uk
Macmillan Cancer Support	0808 808 0000 www.macmillan.org.uk
Marie Curie Cancer Care	0800 716 146 www.mariecurie.org.uk

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 024 7696 5617 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy.

Document History

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