



Frequently Asked Questions

When can I drive after surgery?

When you are not taking pain medication anymore. I think for most surgeries, it is wise not to plan on driving for at least 3 days even if you are not taking medication. Physical discomfort is distracting, and it is very important to be sure that if you drive, you are able to drive safely.

What can I eat after surgery?

Many people are not able to digest food well after surgery. Bloating, constipation, or cramps are not uncommon and are not necessarily due to pain medication. In general, I tell patients they can eat whatever sounds good - just plan on keeping portion sizes down until things get back on track. Keep some Milk of Magnesia on hand in case you cannot have a bowel movement.

What kind of activity can I do after surgery?

For the first three days after almost any surgery, swelling is at its peak. If you minimize strenuous activity during this time, you can help minimize your swelling. After that, I tell people to let their body give them feedback about what they can or cannot handle. Some forms of exercise just need to be modified (not eliminated) for the first few weeks.

How do I take care of stitches?

Stitches should be kept free of bloody crust. Stitches should be treated with antibiotic ointment or Vaseline until they are removed, which should be in the first 5 days after surgery.

What can I do about nausea?

Nausea is very common after surgery. It can be nature's way of making sure you are not trying to over-exert yourself. Low blood pressure from medication used during anesthesia combined with pain medication will often lead to nausea in the first days after surgery. The best way to deal with nausea is to rest and start non-narcotic pain medication (plain Tylenol or ibuprofen) or ice as an alternative.

What can I do about bloating?

Bloating is a natural consequence of having surgery. Your body is not ready to resume its normal digestive habits after an operation. Pain medication will typically make digestive issues worse. I recommend taking Milk of Magnesia at night to try and reset things for the next day. If you have gone more than two days without a bowel movement, I suggest a suppository, Dulcolax.

What should I do with my surgical garments?

I like surgical garments to stay on 24 hours a day for the first 3-7 days minimum. If they become blood-stained, you may spot treat with hydrogen peroxide. You may remove them for cleaning, but know that heat might shrink the garments. For the most part, patients feel more secure with garments on for a few weeks after surgery. You may wear them for comfort purposes as long as you like. In general, if something feels good, it is good.



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What is the best way to make sure I heal with optimal scars?

We are here to help! The quality of your scar is dependent on several things. These include circulation and health of surrounding tissue, as well as level of activity or tension on the scar. Smoking can have negative impact on your healing. It is good to use heavy lotions to hydrate the skin and possibly occlusive tape to help scars that are otherwise stressed in high tension surgery, such as tummy tuck. You will be given lotion at your post op appointment which will be the first step of your scar care. It is never advisable to stress a scar. After body contouring surgery, it is always important to avoid weight gain, which will strain the scar. Scars stay red for up to 24 months after surgery. If scars are healing with progressive thickening, during the healing process, it might be best to treat the scar with a small amount of steroid. This will be assessed at your follow up appointments.

When can I take off the tapes?

I use two types of tape after surgery and only one type of tape is suitable to leave on for long periods of time. Steri-tape is a flat porous tape that is used both to prevent swelling and protect scars. It will not lock in moisture as much as other tape and for this reason, can stay clean and dry on the skin for a period of weeks. We ask you to leave it on for several weeks or at least until your first follow up appointment. Tape that is used to hold on gauze or thick foam tape used for spot compression can be removed either the following day or after 3 days depending on your procedure. In breast reduction or breast lift surgery, foam tape is recommended to stay in place for a full 3-day period after surgery.

When is it OK to shower?

Unless I have asked you to keep your surgical bandages dry for three days (as in many breast reduction or difficult breast revision cases) you may shower whenever you feel up to it. Remove all your bandages except the steri-tape. Feel free to shower with soap and light scrubbing. Carefully dry with clean towels. Please have someone stay with you in case you feel faint during this process.

When is it OK to exercise?

Exercise is great ONLY IF you trust yourself to know when you are over-doing things. Your body is the expert and will tell you when it is ready to start exercising again and when you are doing too much. Carefully increasing your activity levels will keep you active, improve your sleep, and potentially improve your recovery. Forced painful exercise is not worth damaging your surgical result. It is important to note that you may need 6-8 weeks to regain your stamina due to your body's natural response to injury (surgery).

BREAST AUGMENTATION PATIENTS: Do not start doing any exercise involving the pectoralis major until your implants have softened completely, usually 4-6 weeks.



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When is it OK to have sex?

Similar to exercise, it is ok when you feel ready. Start slow and figure out what works for you. If you have had labiaplasty, you need a minimum of two weeks.

When is it OK to have alcohol?

In general, it is a good idea to stay as drug free as possible after surgery. I do not recommend mixing any form of new medications with alcohol. If moderate amounts of alcohol are part of your dietary routine, you can start to re-introduce drinks after you are no longer taking pain medication, which for many people is as early as 2-3 days.

Why is one side more swollen than the other?

If you didn't notice before surgery, you will notice after surgery that in some respects, one side of your body is actually larger than the other. When it comes to recovering, one side is always more swollen than the other. Healing is never the same side to side. If you have one side remarkably and very obviously more swollen than the other, then you may have some fluid that needs to be drained.

Can I get a refill on my pain pills?

Yes, but at some point, it will actually make you feel better to transition to Tylenol and Ibuprofen. Please know that you should anticipate your refill because the office and or the pharmacy may not be available to process this request at night or on weekends.

What do I do if fluid or blood comes out of my incision?

Leaking fluid in the first 24 hours after surgery is to be expected. We place bandages over your incisions to help keep your garments clean, but fluid can soak through. Leakage a week or so after surgery typically means there is minor infection or unusual fluid accumulation. In either case, you should: 1) call the office to schedule an appointment 2) take a warm/hot shower and try to massage any or all fluid out of the opening while it stays open.

What does it mean if I have a fever after surgery?

In the first 1-3 days after surgery, fever is extremely common and is somewhat a normal response to surgery. Most people don't recognize they are having a fever. Fever after 7-10 days is less common. If you are measuring your temperature and realize you have a fever, the next step is to determine whether or not you have symptoms of infection. Do your joints ache? Do you feel nauseated? Do you feel sick? If so, you may have a bacterial infection. Please call our office. We will collect fluid and send it to the lab for identification. It is never helpful or healthy to have indiscriminate prescription for antibiotics so please help your surgeon determine your diagnosis prior to requesting antibiotic treatment. Please note that viral infections, urinary tract infections, and sometimes respiratory infections are all possibly sources of illness after surgery. Remember to involve your surgeon in any type of symptoms of infection within 30 days after surgery.



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What should I do if I have pain in my chest or legs after surgery?

This is an emergency. Chest/back or leg pain could be signs of a blood clot. In an emergency room, you will be escorted to the front of the line if you share that you think you have a blood clot. An ultrasound can determine whether anticoagulation medication is needed to prevent the devastating consequences of blood clots. You will leave the surgery center with Dr. Keen's cellphone number. Please call or text her with concerns.

Is it normal to have numb areas after surgery?

Yes. Some nerves will regrow, and some will not. This happens when skin is lifted and shifted. Sensations of itching or burning typically signify regrowth of stretched or injured nerves.

Is it normal to have redness after surgery?

Yes. In general, all forms of healing use increased circulation (redness) to deliver the type of cells and materials that are needed for the healing process. This process can last up to two years for some procedures. If increased pain, increased redness, and swelling all go together during the first 5-10 days, infection should be considered. Contact our office.

What should I do if I feel a lump after surgery?

Lumps that you can feel under your skin are due to extra healing that takes place around an internal stitch. If you can see rather than feel the lump, it is necessary to point this out to your surgeon in an office visit.

When should I go to the emergency room after surgery?

If you are considering going to the emergency room, please call Dr. Keen immediately.

When is it OK to go in a hot tub after surgery?

Hot tubs can even cause infections in people who have not had surgery. All surgical patients should wait a minimum of 6-8 weeks before going in a hot tub. Any form of standing water (bath tub or swimming pool) can introduce bacteria into your wound for a month after your surgery.

When should I expect my swelling to go away after surgery?

Most forms of swelling start to subside after 3 days. Some forms of swelling can take several months to improve. Significant and visible swelling should be pointed out to your surgeon immediately. Compression therapy or drainage of fluid collections may be initiated.