

Post Op Tips

-after cystectomy

Why the Tube in the nose?

The NG (naso gastric) tube--which is relatively painless-- removes the gastric acids from your belly before they can go down into your intestinal tract and make trouble. The stomach wakes up after surgery much more quickly than the colon does. If the colon is still under the influence of anesthesia, gastric acids secreted by the stomach might drain into the colon, get stuck and possibly cause a blocked bowel which could then perforate--a very bad, potentially life threatening situation. If you have an ulcer, please tell your physician as the tube can irritate the ulcer while in your stomach.

If your stoma has been created from a section of the small intestine, an additional reason to have the NG tube is to keep gastric acid from getting into the small intestine and leaking into the abdominal cavity before the resection heals. The first signs of healing are heralded in after several days when you pass gas. That means the resection is healing and the "splice" is holding. Otherwise the gas would also pass into the abdominal cavity..

Gas Pains- How to cope:

Walking, although slow and painful for some, is the best thing a person can do to help relieve distress from gas pains. It's not instantaneous, but it works. Even when not walking, try to keep moving; try to point and flex your feet over and over again. Try raising the arms, one at a time, over your head, being careful not to entangle the IV lines. Raise the knees, one at a time to the stomach, being careful not to go so far as to disturb the surgical wound.

Dryness of the mouth and nose:

Ask for an ice chip or two. Consider using a water mister for if a dry nose is the problem, or a warm damp cloth held over the face. Chapstick or vaseline can also give relief for dry lips and nose.

Creature comforts help:

A heating pad on the abdomen and under the back can give great relief. Hot cloths on the forehead can also give some comfort. Try adjusting the bed to make yourself as comfortable as possible. Try reading and watching TV. Call friends on the phone. A laptop is a good diversion.

Ask for a massage of the legs, arms, and if you can roll onto the side without too much discomfort, have your back massaged as well. The more the abdomen muscles are relaxed, the better it will be.

Your rights as a patient:

Keep in mind that you can refuse visitors and phone calls, except those you want. The nurses stations have "No Visitors" signs and take messages. Even the

nightly temperature and blood pressure checks are not always needed. Ask.

If you don't feel that you are ready to go home from the hospital, speak up. You usually get one extra day if you complain that morning to the Hospital Social Worker. You should ask that an ET nurse, or stoma nurse (if needed) sees you before you leave the hospital. If the hospital doesn't have such a specialized nurse, you may want to consider contacting a member of the United Ostomy Association in your area, for help with learning how to live with the new 'plumbing'.

When you leave the hospital you may want to ask for a copy of your surgery report.

Above all, take all the time you need to recover from your surgery--don't need to set a record for the fastest recovery--give your body a chance to heal from the inside out.

Remember: This too, shall pass.

If there's something you think should be added, you can email the webmaster. Thanks to Roni, Kathy, Sharon, Antonella, Ken C and Hildegard for input.