

time off work then have a chat with your GP.

### Can I go on holiday?

Like other activities you can go on holiday or travel when you feel ready, however we recommend that you do not travel abroad until after 3 months following major surgery. You should check with your GP before you arrange your holiday.

### When can I have sex?

Most people go through a temporary loss of sex drive (libido) after illness or an operation. Give yourself time and do not expect too much too soon. If you are having problems they can be due to a number of things – slow recovery after surgery, anxiety, fear. Or concern about your partner's feelings.

There are no restrictions about having sex after surgery. As soon as you feel like having sex again, you can. If you are worried about any aspect of your sexual health, speak to your GP, consultant or bowel care specialist nurse.

### Check list for going home?

You may feel that there is a lot to remember so here is a checklist to help you remember so here is a checklist to help you make sure everything is ready for you to go home. They will not all be relevant to you, but you can identify which ones are.

- Relatives/carer informed of discharge
- Transport organised – ambulance or taxi booked if necessary

- Prescription ordered from hospital pharmacy
- Equipment/dressings organised
- Outpatient appointment made (or may be sent on later)
- District nurse informed
- Social services involved
- Home care start date
- Valuables and own medication returned
- Information leaflet(s) given.

### Contact numbers.

Maralyn Boyd ext 47221 bleep 52137  
Susan Franklin ext 47221 bleep 57517  
Rosemary Jobling ext 47221 bleep 52597

### Useful websites

[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
[www.sunderland.nhs.uk/chs](http://www.sunderland.nhs.uk/chs)

This information was correct at the time of printing. While the Trust makes every reasonable effort to keep its information leaflets up to date, very recent changes may not yet be reflected in the guidance and you should discuss this with the clinical staff at the time of your appointment.

Date of publication: Aug 2008  
Reviewed: Jun 2010  
Review due: Jun 2013  
CGSG approval: Sep 2008  
Ref: 246/08

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## YOUR GUIDE TO LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF AFTER SURGERY

### PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

Department of Colorectal Surgery

Sunderland Royal Hospital

This leaflet aims to provide you with information and practical advice following your stay in hospital.

For the first few days it may feel strange and quiet after your stay in a busy hospital ward, and you might be worried about what you can and can't do after your operation.

We hope this leaflet answers some of your questions, and you can refer to it when you are at home. Someone will speak to you before you leave, but you may have other questions or think of something else when you get home.

So if you want anything else please contact your bowel care nurse specialist, GP, or district/practice nurse.

### **How do I look after my wound?**

You can have a bath or a shower. Try to avoid harsh rubbing of the area, simply pat it dry. If you still need a dressing at this stage, then your ward nurse will arrange for you to get this from your district or practice nurse.

### **Am I likely to have any pain?**

Most patients find they have some pain or discomfort for some weeks after surgery. If you still need painkillers we will give you a prescription for some when you are discharged. If the pain gets worse or the painkillers don't work then you should contact your GP or bowel care nurse specialist.

### **What about going to the toilet?**

You may find that your bowel habit has changed. Your bowel actions are likely to be loose, frequent and unpredictable. This change is common because you have had a section of your bowel removed and it can take several months to develop a predictable pattern. It is unlikely to be the same as it was before your operation but it should settle down with time. You will probably need to change what you think as a 'normal' habit for you. Sometimes your bladder function may also be affected by surgery. If you have problems with this contact your GP.

### **Will I need to change my diet?**

You may have a poor appetite after surgery. You don't need to eat a special diet unless the dietician or doctor has recommended one. You should eat a healthy well balanced diet. Try and follow these guidelines:

- 2-3 litres of fluid per day
- small regular meals
- more fibre
- less salt, fat and sugar
- only a little alcohol

### **Will I need more rest?**

You will probably be surprised at how tired you are when you first go home, but this is normal. Try and plan a rest time each day, preferably in bed in the afternoon.

You may find sleeping at night difficult at first. This may just be because your normal

routine has been disturbed, or you may have some pain or discomfort, or you can't move very much. If this is stopping you sleeping then take a mild painkiller before you go to bed.

### **What about exercise and lifting?**

For the first six to eight weeks you should avoid excessive exercise or lifting - this includes vacuuming, carrying heavy shopping bags and mowing the lawn. You should aim to gradually increase the amount of physical activity you do. Household chores can involve a lot of bending and stretching and you may find this uncomfortable. If possible try and get some help with the housework for the first few weeks after you get home.

### **Can I drive?**

You should not drive when you go home. You should wait at least four-six weeks before driving and you should only do so when you can comfortably perform an emergency stop. Your doctor will advise you and you should check with your insurance company to make sure your car insurance is valid.

### **When can I go back to work?**

The time you spend off work will depend on the type of work you do and differs from person to person. Normally you should stay off work for two to three months after your operation. This is only a guideline and if you feel you need more