Laparotomy
Care After Procedure

Please read the instructions outlined below and refer to this sheet in the next few weeks. These discharge instructions provide you with general information on caring for yourself after you leave the hospital. Your caregiver may also give you specific instructions. While your treatment has been planned according to the most current medical practices available, unavoidable complications occasionally occur. If you have any problems or questions after discharge, please call your doctor.

ACTIVITY
- Rest as much as possible the first two weeks at home.
- Avoid strenuous activity such as heavy lifting (more than 10 pounds), pushing or pulling. Limit stair climbing to once or twice a day for the first week, then slowly increase this activity.
- Take frequent rest periods throughout the day.
- Talk with your caregiver about when you may resume your usual physical activity.
- Patients need to be out of bed and walking as much as possible. This decreases the chance of:
  - Blood clots.
  - Pneumonia.

NUTRITION
- You can resume your normal diet once you regain bowel function.
- Drink plenty of fluids (6-8 glasses a day or as instructed).
- Eat a well-balanced diet.
- Daily portions of food from the meat (protein), milk, vegetable, and bread groups are necessary for your health.

ELIMINATION
It is very important not to strain during bowel movements. If constipation should occur, you may:
- Take a mild laxative (such as Milk of Magnesia®)
- Add fruit and bran to your diet
- Drink more fluids

HYGIENE
- You may wash your hair.
- Take showers not baths until 4-6 weeks after surgery.
- If your incision is closed, you may take a shower or tub bath.

FEVER
If you feel feverish or have shaking chills, take your temperature. If it is 100.4° F (38° C) or above, call your doctor. The fever may mean there is an infection.

PAIN CONTROL
- Mild discomfort may occur.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver.
- If a prescription was given, please follow your doctor's directions.
- If pain is not relieved or becomes more severe, notify your doctor.

INCISION CARE
- Keep your incision site clean with soap and water.

- Do not use a dressing unless your cut (*incision*) from surgery is draining or irritated.
- If you have small adhesive strips in place and they do not fall off within 10 days, carefully peel them off.
- Check your incision and surrounding area daily for any redness, swelling, discoloration, heavy drainage or separation of the skin. If any of these are present, notify your doctor.

SEXUAL INTERCOURSE

Do not have sexual intercourse until your follow-up appointment, unless your doctor tells you otherwise.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You are unable to tolerate food/drinks.
- You are unable to pass gas or have a bowel movement.

Document Released: 08/10/2005 Document Re-Released: 09/26/2009
ExitCare® Patient Information ©2011 ExitCare, LLC.