

Physical Activity Expectations Once Cleared for Bariatric Surgery

Two weeks before surgery, during the presurgical diet

- ▶ Practice deep breathing technique. Inhale through your nose and fill your lungs downward and toward your back by expanding your ribs. Control the exhale through your nose or mouth and fully empty your lungs. This is to help prevent gas pains after surgery. Also, anesthesia can sometimes make it difficult to take a deep breath after surgery. Practicing deep breathing before surgery can help prevent this.
- ▶ Start practicing blood clot prevention exercises. Exercise instruction is located in the individual bariatric procedure booklets on our patient education website.
- ▶ Discontinue high-intensity aerobic exercise (any exercise that makes you breathe hard or sweat profusely), such as elliptical, jogging, fast outdoor biking or spin class due to low caloric intake during the presurgical diet. But continue with walking program, pool exercises or bike riding at a moderate pace until the day of surgery.

Weeks 1–2 postsurgery

- ▶ At minimum, do some sort of activity every hour (blood clot prevention exercises or slow walking) for a continuous five minutes every hour. As your energy level allows, increase your duration of walking up to 15 minutes without stopping, twice a day.
- ▶ Continue breathing exercises. Practice controlled inhalation through the nose and out through the mouth, filling the lungs to prevent pneumonia and to provide fresh oxygen to the surgery site to promote healing. Continue using your incentive spirometer as directed once you are home.
- ▶ If you have to breathe through your mouth to keep up with exercise, you need to slow down. If you are walking and talking, you are more than likely breathing through your mouth, which can cause intense gas pain. Keep your speed slow. You should not be sweating, feel weak or unsteady after exercise.
- ▶ Listen to your body. Your body can tell you more than anyone can. If you are extremely fatigued, decrease the duration of your next walk and try to take a longer walk later. Every day is not a good day, but don't skip activity. You will just need to adjust your duration of activity.
- ▶ No lifting more than 10 pounds or as the doctor directs. This includes laundry, heavy cooking pots/pans, children, animals etc. If it hurts, stop immediately!
- ▶ Remember the risk of developing a blood clot is increased for three months after surgery, so we discourage airplane travel.
- ▶ If you must take a long, continuous car ride in the first three months after surgery, you will need to get out every 45 minutes to an hour to take a short walk.
- ▶ No forward bending/crunching, twisting or rotation of spine to protect the surgery site and promote healing. If it hurts, stop immediately!

Weeks 3–4 postsurgery

- ▶ Log your fluid, protein and caloric intake.
- ▶ If your energy level allows, take a 20-minute walk twice a day. If you cannot tolerate taking a 20-minute walk twice a day, you will want to continue taking short walks 3–4 times a day. You should be walking fast enough to breathe deeply, but not gasping for air. You do not need to push for speed.
- ▶ At 4–6 weeks post-op, the ultimate goal would be for you to take a slightly faster-paced walk or moderate bike ride for 30 minutes daily.
- ▶ You are not exercising to promote weight loss because you need to allow your body time to heal. You are exercising for blood flow. There will be plenty of time to progress your exercise later.
- ▶ If you are dehydrated, your weight loss will be slower and your body will be working harder to function, making you fatigued. Keep up with your fluid intake.
- ▶ Remember, your metabolism will be at its best with consistent exercise and optimal nutrition.
- ▶ No lifting more than 10 pounds or as doctor directed.
- ▶ A slow recumbent bike speed is about equal to low-level walking in terms of intensity, so you may substitute a slow bike ride if preferred to walking.

Week 5–6 postsurgery

- ▶ Attend follow-up appointment with physical therapist. Wear appropriate footwear to appointment. Be prepared to exercise.
- ▶ Exercise will be adjusted according to nutritional intake, energy levels and weight-loss parameters.
- ▶ Daily exercise program will be progressed. You will be working harder with exercise now that you are healed.
- ▶ Strengthening exercises may be added to cardiovascular/walking program.
- ▶ Lifting restrictions are usually removed, per surgeon approval.
- ▶ At this point after surgery, an individualized exercise program will be designed for you. No two exercise programs are the same.

You will be seen postsurgery at one month, three months, six months, 12 months and 18 months. After that you will be seen annually. But remember, anytime you need us in between these scheduled appointments, please call. We are here for you!