



**Rafael Ramos Vecchio, MD**  
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## Abdominoplasty – Postoperative Instructions

Thank you for choosing Careaga Plastic Surgery for your surgery. These instructions are designed to help you recover smoothly and safely while optimizing your results. Please read everything carefully and contact our office with any concerns or unexpected changes.

### Medications You Must Take

1. Cephalexin (or Clindamycin) – if you were prescribed antibiotics, these are to decrease the chances of infection. Start the night of your surgery and continue for 5–7 days as prescribed. Always take with food.
2. Ointment – if your surgical incisions are open to air, you can apply Vaseline (or bacitracin if it was prescribed) to prevent pads and dressings to stick to the incisions. Apply twice daily as directed.

### Medications You Can Take if Needed

1. Acetaminophen (Tylenol) – for mild to moderate pain. Avoid aspirin, ibuprofen, or other NSAIDs for 2 weeks.
2. Hydrocodone or Tylenol #3 – you may have received a second line medication for pain, take only as needed every 6 hours.
  - Take this medication with a stool softener as it will constipate you.
  - It can be taken with the Tylenol, but if pain is controlled, it is best to just take Tylenol instead.
3. Ondansetron (Zofran) – for nausea, if prescribed.
4. Stool softener – if using prescription pain medication, take a stool softener daily to avoid constipation.

### Dressings and Drain Care

- If your incisions are covered with steri-strips/surgical tape: Keep the adhesive tape on until it falls off. They will peel off on their own in 10–14 days. If it's partially lifted and doesn't stick back, you can trim these edges.
- If you have a yellow dressing on your belly button, leave it in place. This dressing will be removed at your follow up visit in 1 week.



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- If your incisions are covered with a loose absorbent pad, apply Vaseline to your wounds twice daily.
- If you have surgical drains, empty each drain twice a day or as needed when half full. Record the color and amount of drainage in milliliters (mL).
- Bring your drain log to your follow-up appointment. Drains are usually removed when output is less than 25–30 mL (≈1 oz) in 24 hours for two consecutive days, but this may vary depending on the location.
- Keep all drain insertion sites clean and covered with small gauze and tape; change dressings daily or as needed if soiled.
- If you had liposuction, you will be wearing a compressive garment. It is normal to have oozing of thin bloody liquid through the incision that may saturate your garment. Feel free to replace the absorbent pads as needed.

## The Night of Your Surgery

- Sleep in a semi-reclined position with your head and knees slightly elevated to reduce swelling on your surgical site and decrease the tension on your abdomen
- Wear the abdominal binder or compressive garment at all times, except for showering
- It is normal to feel pressure or tightness on your abdomen. Avoid twisting or using your arms to push yourself up.
- Eat light, soft meals and stay hydrated. Avoid salty foods that can increase swelling.
- When walking, maintain a hunched position to decrease the tension on your skin

## The Morning After Surgery and the First Week

- Continue sleeping with your upper body elevated for at least one week.
- You may shower 48 hours after surgery. Let warm water run gently over your body and pat dry. Replace dressings afterward.
- Do not submerge in a bath, pool, or hot tub for at least 6 weeks.
- Reapply ointment on your incisions twice a day after gentle cleaning if your wounds are NOT covered by adhesive.
- Expect mild bruising and swelling for 2–3 weeks; this will gradually improve.
- Walk slowly around your home several times a day to promote circulation and reduce the risk of blood clots.
- • Avoid bending forward, heavy lifting, or raising your arms above shoulder height for 2 weeks.



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## Activity Guidelines

- Do not lift anything heavier than 10 lb (4.5 kg) for 3 weeks.
- Avoid exercise, driving, and sexual activity until cleared by Dr. Ramos—usually after 3–4 weeks.
- You may resume light walking after one week, but no core exercises or stretching that strains the abdomen for 6 weeks.
- **Avoid smoking or vaping during recovery. This impairs circulation and delays healing.**
- Avoid direct heat or sun exposure to the abdomen for 3 months.

## Scar and Skin Care

- Keep incision areas clean and dry. Once Steri-Strips fall off and incisions are closed, you may start silicone-based scar gel or sheets (usually around 2 weeks).
- Use sunscreen SPF 30 or higher daily over scars once fully healed to prevent darkening.
- Numbness, tightness, and firmness are normal and will improve over several months.
- After 2 weeks, if your wounds are closed, you can start using silicone scar tape for management for scars. Silicone scar creams can also be used if the tape is bothersome or in an area that is hard to apply. This can be bought over the counter at any pharmacy.

## Follow-Up Visits

- First visit: 1–3 days after surgery for drain check or removal.
- Second visit: 1 week post-op to evaluate healing and remove sutures if present.
- Additional visits: at 3 weeks, 6 weeks, 3 months, and as needed thereafter.

## When to Call the Office

Please contact us immediately if you experience: • Persistent fever over 101°F (38.3°C), • Excessive redness or warmth around the incisions, • Foul-smelling or pus-like drainage, • Sudden increase in abdominal swelling, • Pain unrelieved by medication, or • Shortness of breath or chest pain.

If any urgent symptoms occur after hours, go to the nearest emergency room.