POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS FOLLOWING ESOPHAGECTOMY (TRANSTHORACIC/TRANSHIATAL)

DIET

At the time of discharge, you will be restricted to a soft, esophageal diet for approximately 1 month. This diet is recommended to ease the movement of food through the temporarily swollen areas of the esophagus and stomach. Tolerance to the diet is individual and may change with time.

Life style changes:
You must be sitting when eating all meals and you must remain upright either sitting or standing for 1-2 hours after eating. This allows food to move down your new esophagus with gravity.

You must sleep at an incline of 30 degrees at night using pillows or wedge

All pills must be taken in liquid form or crushed (see attached page)

You will also be discharged on supplemental nighttime jejunostomy tube feedings. This is to allow you to eat comfortably throughout the day without having to worry about meeting your full caloric needs. The tube feedings will be weaned over the next several weeks as your appetite and oral intake increases.

ACTIVITIES

Walking is permitted and encouraged. Start with short walks and gradually increase the distance and length of time that you walk. Climbing stairs is also permitted.

No lifting greater than 5 pounds for a full six weeks from the time of surgery. Lifting will continue to be restricted to 10-15 pounds for three months following surgery.

Light range of motion exercises on the operative side is encouraged. This will help to stretch and strengthen the muscles and keep your shoulder moving freely.

Driving may be resumed four to six weeks following surgery. If you continue to take pain medication beyond this time, driving should be avoided.

Expect that for a time after surgery, stamina and strength will be slow to return and residual fatigue may be present. This is a normal process after any surgical procedure. Attempt to increase activities gradually but rest when necessary.
WOUND CARE

You may shower – wash the incision area gently with warm water and soap.

On some surgical wounds, stitches are placed just beneath the surface of the incision. They are fashioned from the type of material that is absorbed by your body in about 4-5 weeks and therefore do not need to be removed. Occasionally, you will note a small white string at your incision site. This can be cut at the surface with a clean pair of scissors.

Steri-strips may be removed as they begin to lift off the wound. If they do not begin to do so, they may be completely removed 14 days after surgery. Moisten the strips with a little peroxide if they are stuck to the incision. You may wash the wound with mild soap and water after the steri-strips are removed.

Any staples or sutures remaining at the time of discharge will be removed at the first office visit.

MEDICATIONS

Pain medications will be prescribed for you at the time of discharge. We recommend Extra Strength Tylenol Elixir or Ibuprofen Elixir (Advil, Motrin, etc.) for mild to moderate pain. These can be purchased over-the-counter and are labeled as “Children’s Formula”. It is the same medication, as long as taking an adult dose. For severe pain, Ibuprofen elixir may be taken in conjunction with your pain medication.

Liquid Ibuprofen – Usual strength is 100mg/5ml. – Usual adult dose 200 to 600 mg every 4 to 6 hours:
- 200mg = 10ml.
- 300mg = 15ml.
- 400mg = 20 ml.
- 500mg = 25ml.
- 600mg = 30ml.
- etc.

Do not swallow pills, medications will need to be crushed or taken in liquid form (see attachment).

Stool softeners (i.e. Colace Elixir) or laxatives (i.e. Milk of Magnesia) may be necessary following surgery if you do not have a spontaneous bowel movement. Call the office if the problem persists.

RETURN TO WORK

Most patients will be able to return to work or their usual level of activity within 3 months following surgery. This may need to be an individualized decision between you and your employer.

CALL THE OFFICE

If you have any problems or questions, please call the office 323-442-9066. Call if you have persistent problems with:
- Fever greater than 101.5 degrees
- Increasing abdominal pain
- Pus or redness around the incisions
- Increased difficulty swallowing or change in swallowing sensation
THINGS TO EXPECT

After thoracic surgery, breathing may be uncomfortable and there may be an element of shortness of breath or feeling “winded”. If this increases or breathing seems to be more difficult that at the time of discharge, please call the office.

Slight bruising, itchiness, and soreness at your incision is normal. Also, it is common to feel an area of numbness either in front of or around the incision site. This is a normal part of the healing process and you should not become alarmed.

FOLLOW-UP

Your follow-up appointment will include a chest x-ray, which you will get just prior to your appointment.

Please call 323-442-9066 within one to two days after discharge to schedule a follow-up appointment.