

# John L. Birbari, M.D.

General Surgery

Post-Operative LINX Education

## ***What to expect after surgery***

Laparoscopic surgery requires inflating your abdomen with carbon dioxide gas. This commonly causes pain in the back, neck and shoulders that subsides after 5-7 days. Walking frequently and applying warm/cold compresses may help with the discomfort.

The incision pain is usually worst the first 2 days. Some patients have temporary painful spasms while eating and these can last up to 12 weeks after surgery.

A soft diet is recommended only for the day of LINX Placement. This will help you ease into solid foods. A regular diet can be started the day after. You want to activate the LINX band right away, allowing it to open and close with the passing of food.

## ***First week after surgery***

We call this the "honeymoon" stage: Many patients report food going down relatively well and acid is at a minimum, if any.

## **DIET "It's not WHAT you eat, but HOW you eat it"**

- Warm or room temperature beverages help with muscle spasms or chest pain by relaxing the esophageal muscle.
- Drink a few sips of water before taking your first bite of food and between bites as necessary.
- Eat frequently: 5-7 Small frequent meals a day or a small snack every 1-2 hours are recommended; start with a 1 cup portion size and increase as tolerated.
- Eat slowly, take small bites of foods and chew food well, so that it can easily pass down your esophagus and into your stomach.
- Avoid dry foods such as chips, bread, crackers, pasta, pizza, rice, and meat which are more likely to cause problems.
- Avoid cold or ice water and carbonated drinks.
- Avoid taking large gulps of water/drinks; this may increase amount of inhaled air and belching.
- Limit "gas-forming" foods or habits such as: chewing gum, fatty foods, beans, nuts, citrus fruits, raw fruits, raw vegetables, fiber supplements and using a straw.

### **Sample Diet:**

Soft scrambled eggs

Warm soups

Overcooked vegetables

Mashed potatoes with gravy

Cottage Cheese

Yogurt

Cheese cubes

Moist Fish

## ***Second week after surgery***

Scar tissue will be forming at this time. This is a good thing! This is your body's way of healing. The scar tissue forms a capsule around the device keeping it from moving up or down. "Physical Therapy" will be required. What is physical therapy for the LINX? EATING! By eating and swallowing frequently you are exercising the device. The opening and closing of the LINX device stretches out the scar tissue. This results in optimum healing of the LINX. Similar to exercising a knee after surgery, constant movement will allow the device to stay mobile and prevent long term problems with swallowing.

You may experience some difficulty swallowing, chest pain, or increased belching. This is normal and expected. Occasionally the chest pain is caused by spasms of the esophagus; your esophagus is a muscle and like any other muscle in your body it may spasm as a result of the surgery. This pain is sometimes described as "sharp" or "stabbing" but does not last long. These are known and expected symptoms! Just take slow deep breaths during these episodes till they subside. You should continue eating frequently, as eating often will alleviate these symptoms.

**DO NOT revert to just liquids.**

***PPI Use (All Antacid Medications):***

The LINX surgery should stop the need for antacid medications such as Nexium, Protonix, Prevacid, etc. However, we recommend gradually tapering off these medications over 6-8 weeks after surgery. Your surgeon will instruct you how to do so.

***WOUND CARE***

There will be 4 to 5 small incisions in the abdominal area. Your incisions will be closed with sutures and a topical skin adhesive or glue. The glue will fall off on its own. Do not rub, scratch, or pick at the skin adhesive. Do not apply any medications on any products to the wound. The surgeon may allow you to peel off the glue only after evaluating that the incisions are healed.

You may shower only with no direct water pressure on your incisions, after 24 hrs. Pat dry your incisions. No bathing, immersion or swimming for at least 14 days.

***ACTIVITIES***

You should not participate in strenuous activity for 2 weeks. Walking is permitted and encouraged beginning within hours of your surgery. Start with short walks and with assistance as needed, and gradually increase the distance and length of time that you walk. Climbing stairs is also permitted. Some assistance may be required initially.

You should not lift anything greater than 20 pounds for 2 weeks. If you had a hernia repair, no heavy lifting for 6 weeks. Lifting heavier objects may cause increased intra-abdominal pressure and injury to your healing body.

Physical activities should not include any pulling or pushing until discussed with the your doctor during the first follow-up visit.

No alcohol drinking or driving while taking pain medicine.

***BOWEL MOVEMENT***

The first bowel movement may occur anywhere from 1-5 days after surgery – as long as you are not nauseated or having abdominal pain this variation is acceptable. The intestines are usually somewhat lazy for a few days after surgery causing gas, bloating and constipation. Drinking plenty of water and walking are helpful.

If constipated, please take 2 Dulcolax stool softener tablets first then begin taking Miralax as indicated on the bottle. You may also try Magnesium Citrate. If these methods do not result in a bowel movement within 48 hours, please call our office.

## ***RETURN TO WORK***

Everyone returns to work at different times. As a rough guide, most patients will be able to return to work or their usual level of function 2 weeks following surgery. This may need to be an individualized decision between you and your employer. Some patients have residual fatigue following general anesthesia for a couple of weeks.

## ***CALL THE OFFICE***

If you have any problems or if you notice any of the following symptoms:

1. Fever greater than 101 degrees
2. If you can only tolerate swallowing liquids and are unable to swallow solid foods
3. Uncontrolled abdominal or chest pain with no relief
4. Redness, warmth or pus draining from incision sites
5. Persistent nausea or inability to take in liquids
6. Severe cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing

If you are calling after hours or on weekends / holidays, call the office number at 817-348-9222 and you will be connected to the answering service to reach the Physician on call.

## ***POST OP APPOINTMENT***

After your surgery call our office 817-348-9222 to schedule a post-op appointment with Dr. Birbari for 3 weeks after surgery.