



HOME CARE AFTER SURGERY

- Be sure you have a **NUMBER TO CALL** if the patient has any serious complications, or other problems such as loss of appetite, depression, anxiety, or insomnia.
- Ask if the patient needs to monitor any **VITAL SIGNS** at home such as blood pressure or temperature.
- Know the **SIGNS OF BLOOD CLOTS (DVT OR PE)**: swelling, redness or breathing difficulties. Be certain that you have a way to reach the doctor – even after hours.
- Know the basic **SIGNS OF WOUND, BLOOD OR URINARY TRACT INFECTION**: fever, redness, rashes, pain, swelling around the incision, drainage from the incision, painful urination.
- Know the **SIGNS OF INTERNAL BLEEDING**: low blood pressure, sweating, confusion, shallow breathing, weak pulse, and pale skin.
- If the patient has a **DRAIN** in place, learn how to empty it and what the fluid from the drain should look like. What changes warrant calling the doctor?
- Use a **MEDICATION LOG** to keep track of dosages and side effects of multiple medications. Consider using a **PILL ORGANIZER** to organize your drugs and a **PILL SPLITTER** if tablets need to be cut in half.
- Be aware that **NARCOTIC PAIN MEDICATIONS** such as morphine, hydrocodone, or oxycontin can cause dizziness, loss of appetite, constipation and hallucinations. Do not drink **ALCOHOL** when taking pain medications.
- Be aware that **ACETAMINOPHEN** – the ingredient in Tylenol – is present in many over-the-counter medications as well as prescription pain medications. Adding extra doses of Tylenol to your prescription medications can cause serious liver damage.
- Does the patient have any **DIETARY RESTRICTIONS** or need any nutritional supplements? Will they need medications to prevent **CONSTIPATION**? What does the doctor recommend?
- Ask how much **ACTIVITY OR EXERCISE** is appropriate. Should the patient be up and walking to prevent blood clots? When can the patient drive?