

# ***What to Expect After Your Radical Prostatectomy***

## **Normal Symptoms**

- Feeling tired.
- A mild to moderate amount of swelling in your scrotum or ankles – *this should get better within a few weeks. To help with the swelling, position yourself to be comfortable and to help fluid drain back toward your heart, put your feet up and/or put a rolled towel under your scrotum.*
- Feeling as if you need to urinate – *this is caused from the catheter balloon which is making your bladder feel full.*
- Small amounts of blood in your urine – *the color may look peach, pink, and/or may have small strings of clots. It may persist after the catheter is removed. This is caused from bladder irritation.*
- A fever of less than 101.5 degrees – *this is probably a mild collapse of your lungs.*
- Both legs/feet are swollen, particularly, at night after sitting/walking for a prolonged period of time -- *this is caused by lymph fluid backing up in your legs.*
- Incision is slightly red/pink, with small amount of blood or clear drainage, and not painful – *this is caused by your skin's reaction to being cut.*
- Small openings in the incision (less than .5 inches) – *these will heal with time.*
- Incision feeling “tight” – *this will improve with time also.*
- Feeling as if there is a small knot under your skin or a small thread coming from the wound – *this is a dissolvable suture and will go away in 4-6 weeks.*
- Mild amount of discharge at the tip of the penis – *this may look like pus or be blood tinged, but this is mucous which is your body's normal response to a catheter.*
- An appearance of penis shortening is normal after surgery – *this will resolve as scar tissue relaxes.*

## Normal Symptoms (continued).....

- Little to no control of the urinary stream is expected after Foley catheter removal -- *This takes 1 to 3 months to improve and occurs more rapidly with pelvic muscle exercises.*
- Problems attaining or maintaining erections is expected for 6 to 12 months after surgery as the nearby nerves are frequently stretched. Viagra or injections can be able medications of assistance during this time.

## Symptoms That Are Not Normal

*(If you experience any of the following symptoms, call University Hospital right away at the following telephone number - 303-372-0000 and ask the operator to page the Urology Resident who is on call).*

- Feeling as if you are going to passing out.
- Bright red blood in your urine.
- Large blood clots in the bladder that will not pass through the catheter.
- Urine that resembles the color of red wine.
- One leg swollen or painful -- *this may be caused by a blood clot in the leg.*
- Fever over 101.5 degrees -- *this may be a bladder, lung, or wound infection.*
- Red and warm incision; especially, with a fever -- *this signifies a wound infection and is normally painful as well.*
- White discharge (pus) coming from the incision.
- Large opening in the incision.
- Shortness of breath.
- Chest pain -- if this is acute and new -- *go to your nearest emergency room.*

## ***Answers to Commonly-Asked Questions About Prostate Cancer Surgery***

- Prostate cancer surgery normally takes 2 to 3 hours.
- Generally, patients are in the hospital over night and can go home the next day.
- Patients are sent home with a Foley catheter and should use a leg bag during the day and a night bag while sleeping through the night. There is a simple clamp at the bottom of each bag that should be released when the bag is full, which empties the urine into a toilet or sink.
- During showering with a catheter still in place, the plastic tubing of the collection bag, that connects to the rubber catheter, can be disconnected and the catheter can drain freely into the shower.
- Your catheter will be removed approximately two weeks after the surgery date.
- A small drain is placed during the surgery that helps evacuate pelvic fluid. This drain is usually removed before patients are sent home. The incision, where the drain was inserted, will scab over and close without sutures.
- Your first visit with your surgeon, following the catheter removal, is at six weeks. A PSA will be drawn at that time.
- Patients are generally seen by the doctor every six months following surgery in order to evaluate for prostate cancer recurrence, treat any difficulties with urination (or lack of control), and to help with any sexual function. A PSA and digital rectal exam are generally performed at every visit to help detect cancer recurrence.

## ***Things You CAN Do After Your Radical Prostatectomy***

- Keep your wound clean and dry.
- Walk, hike, climb stairs, play golf after 4 weeks; however, do NOT carry the golf bag.
- Bend over.
- Shower.
- Bathe after three (3) days.
- Swim/hot tub after three (3) weeks.
- Lift items LESS than ten (10) lbs.
- You may drive IF the catheter has been removed and you are NOT taking any pain medication.
- Rub Vitamin E or other lotion on your wound.
- Remove tape strips, across the wound, after 10 days.
- Use your incentive spirometer (breathing machine) to expand your lungs for the first week after your surgery.
- Sex -

*You may return to previous sexual activity, as soon as you feel up to it, after the catheter has been removed. Even if you were able to have nerve-sparing surgery, frequently, men are unable to get spontaneous erections for six to twelve months after the surgery because the nerves have been stretched and/or bruised. Viagra or other oral medications, vacuum pumps, or injections are all excellent ways of improving erections until spontaneous erections have returned. Your doctor will usually have you start taking an oral medication when you see him/her approximately six weeks after the surgery. It is good to keep the blood flowing into the penis, with an oral or injected medication, or with a vacuum pump, several times per week even if you do not continue to orgasm. Remember, when you do climax, everything will still feel good, but semen will no longer be ejaculated through your penis (we call this a dry orgasm).*

## ***Things You CANNOT Do After Your Radical Prostatectomy***

- Do NOT drive with a catheter.
- Do NOT drive while on pain medication.
- Do NOT insert rectal suppositories at home, while the catheter is in place.
- Do NOT lift more than ten (10) lbs., until after six (6) weeks after your surgery.
- Do NOT bathe until three (3) days after your surgery.
- Do NOT sit in a hot tub or swim until three (3) weeks after your surgery.