

COLECTOMY

GENERAL INFORMATION

A colectomy is the removal of part of the large bowel usually with joining of the two ends. This operation is usually done to remove a diseased part of the large bowel, either because of benign disease or because of a malignant disease. Your doctor would have discussed with you the indications for your operation.

DIAGNOSIS

You presented to your doctor with symptoms relating to large bowel disease. You were most likely investigated with a colonoscopy and/or a barium enema. Your doctor has decided that it is appropriate to treat you by means of a colectomy.

PRE-OPERATIVE PREPARATION

- You will need to have your large bowel cleansed before the operation.
- Your doctor will explain to you whether he wants this done at home or whether he needs you to be admitted to hospital for bowel preparation. This preparation is very important.
- Make sure your doctor knows what medicines you take, especially medicines which may affect blood clotting.
- You must not eat or drink anything for 6 hours before the operation.

THE OPERATION

- You will be asleep for the operation.
- The operation usually takes 2 hours.
- Your doctor would have discussed with you whether he proposes to give you a temporary bag (colostomy) or whether he proposes to do an anastomosis without the need for a bag.

POST-OPERATIVE CARE

- You will wake up in the recovery room or in the intensive care unit.
- You will have an infusion into your arm, neck or chest. You may have a tube through your nose into your stomach. You will probably have a catheter in your bladder. The anaesthetist may have decided to do an epidural on you for pain control.
- When you are well enough to leave the intensive care unit you will be returned to your usual hospital bed.
- At an appropriate time your stitches will be removed.

HOME CARE

- You will be instructed to what extent you are allowed to walk around.
- You will be instructed regarding bathing and showering.
- You will be instructed by your doctor regarding driving and returning to work.

COMPLICATIONS

- A colectomy is a major abdominal operation and complications do occur. You must be aware of the following possible complications.
- Even if your doctor has decided that he is going to do a resection and anastomosis, you must be aware of the fact that sometimes a situation may arise while you are under anaesthetic that may make your doctor decide that it would be safer for you if he gave you a colostomy.
- The most important complication is a leak from the anastomosis. This may necessitate re-operation or may lead to an intestinal fistula. It may lead to a major intra-abdominal infection and peritonitis. It may lead to intra-abdominal abscesses.

- Chest infections are fairly common after this operation. This is the reason that your doctor will probably order chest physiotherapy.
- Deep vein thrombosis and pulmonary embolism are possible after any major operation.

pil-colectomy.doc/ver 1/8 December 2002