



What to expect after surgery: Anal fistulotomy

Patient and family information, brought to you by the Education Committee of APSA

Your surgeon will provide you with specific instructions for care after surgery. The follow lists common recommendations and things to look out for after surgery.

Pain management:

- Acetaminophen (Tylenol[®]) and/or ibuprofen will usually be all that your child needs to minimize any pain.
- Follow the instructions on the bottle to ensure your child is getting the proper dose.
- If your surgeon gave you a prescription for pain medication make sure you follow the instructions for the dose and frequency.

Wound management:

- If your child has gauze or packing over the incision in the anus, this can typically be removed the next day after surgery.
- Your surgeon will recommend frequent bathing of the incision in the anus, usually twice a day for the first week after surgery
- Your surgeon may prescribe an antibiotic cream for the anus after surgery, to be applied after diaper changes.
- Sometimes there will be some bloody drainage from the incision in the anus after surgery, but this should be minimal and go away over the first few days.

Activity:

- There are no specific restrictions on activity after surgery for babies and young children. Your surgeon will give your activity restrictions if your child is an older child or teenager.
- Your child can crawl, walk, and run normally as long as it doesn't cause pain.
- Your child may have soreness near the anus. Getting back to regular activities as soon as your child is comfortable is a good idea.
- Your child will not cause any damage to the incision by being active.
- Encourage your child to rest when feeling tired.

School:

- If your child feels well they can return to school right away.
- A few days off might be needed if your child is more tired and sore than usual and is not eating well.

Bathing:

- Your surgeon will recommend frequent bathing after an anal fistulotomy in order to keep the wound clean while it is healing.

Diet:

- After hernia surgery your child should be able to eat what they normally would.
- A special diet is not required after anal fistulotomy surgery.
- Your child may eat less than usual for the first day or two after surgery. If you find that your child's appetite does not return to normal within a week of surgery, contact your surgeon's office.

Bowel movements:

- The first bowel movement may occur 1-5 days after surgery. As long as your child is not having tummy pain and is eating and drinking, not having a bowel movement for a few days is ok.
- Sometimes the combination of pain medication and decreased appetite can slow the bowels down for a few days.
- If you think your child is constipated, contact your child's surgeon before giving any over-the-counter laxatives.

When to call your surgeon's office

- If your child has a fever.
- Pain or swelling at the incision site that is getting worse over time.
- Redness, warmth or drainage from the incision site.
- Persistent nausea or inability to drink/eat.

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