

## Lower Surgery Packs

We asked people in the community what they needed when they were recovering from surgery and we've done our best to research thoroughly the best ways to facilitate recovery from lower surgery. However we are not medical professionals and you should always follow the advice of your surgeon. If this pack contradicts anything your surgeon has told you, always follow their advice. If in doubt, Please contact your doctor.

Good luck with your recovery from everyone at Trans Aid Cymru!

## HYGIENE AND GENERAL CARE

### Included in this pack:

- 2 packs of baby wipes
- Deodorant
- Dry shampoo
- Reusable hot & cold pack

Maintaining hygiene is really important after surgery to help you keep your surgery site clean. It also helps to feel fresh! Though surgeons usually encourage bathing, you might find it difficult to shower, so we've included some baby wipes, deodorant and dry shampoo. We've been careful to choose products that are gentle and suitable for sensitive skin.

Cold packs are really good for reducing swelling and managing pain. Please follow the instructions that came with the product, don't put ice or ice-packs directly onto your skin, and don't use them for more than 20 minutes at a time.

Heat is also a really effective way of reducing pain and using your heated pack can be useful for easing any aches or strains you have in other parts of your body. However, **DO NOT USE HEAT PACKS ON YOUR SURGERY SITE**. Heat packs might temporarily relieve pain, but using heat packs on open wounds or surgery sites can cause burns underneath the skin before they are visible and could prolong recovery. Do not fall asleep when using a heat pack, as this can also cause burns.

Resting is really important for recovery, but it's also important not to spend too much time in bed. Getting mobile again after surgery is an important part of recovery, and doing some gentle movement will help prevent aches and strains that you might get from sitting in one position too long.

## DILATING

### Included in this pack

- Puppy pads
- KY jelly
- A small, hand-held mirror
- Soul Source dilators

Your surgeon will have given you instructions on how to dilate, and how important it is to keep this up. You should have been provided with a set of dilators, but you may wish to invest in specialist dilators designed for vaginoplasty patients. Puppy pads are large, absorbent, disposable pads you can put down when you dilate or wash if you are worried about getting blood or other fluids on your bed.

Using a water-based lubricant will help make dilating easier, and if you are having trouble with pain, you might find taking painkillers half an hour before you dilate helpful. You might find it helpful doing things such as lighting scented candles or putting on music to help you relax and feel comfortable, or you may

find putting something on the TV useful as it creates some background noise and keeps your mind occupied.

However, you will need to see what you're doing, especially at first. A small mirror will help with that!

## **WOUND CARE, DOUCHING AND SCAR HEALING**

### **Included in this pack:**

- Hibiscrub
- Sterile saline solution
- Aqueous Fresh cream
- Femfresh sensitive skin intimate wash
- Disposable cotton pads or reusable soft cotton pads
- Baby lotion
- Large maxi pads
- Adult diapers
- Kelo-cote

### **Hibiscrub**

Sanitizing your hands before you touch your surgery site is essential to prevent infection and ensure a speedy recovery. Please read the instructional leaflet before using Hibiscrub and always follow your surgeon's instructions on how to care for your surgery site.

### **Washing and douching**

Keeping your surgery site clean is also important. You can wash with sterile saline solution instead of water, or aqueous cream/emollient instead of soap because they are free of soaps, scents, or any harsh chemicals unsuitable for sensitive skin. Sterile saline solution is also suitable for washing open wounds. As your vagina is not self-cleaning, you will also need to douche regularly to ensure you keep it clean.

Once your surgery site has begun to heal, you may find femfresh sensitive skin intimate wash or other mild washes appropriate for washing the outside of your vagina preferable as saline solution can be very expensive.

You can use disposable or reusable cotton pads, or a soft wash cloth to clean your genitals. You should wash regularly, and be gentle with your surgery site as it will be sore.

### **Baby lotion**

Wiping with toilet paper a lot can make your genitals or your anus feel sore, which is why a lot of people use baby wipes. Unfortunately, baby wipes cannot be flushed so baby lotion can be a good option, which can be applied to toilet paper before wiping to prevent soreness or dryness.

### **Maxi pads and adult diapers**

Some amount of bleeding and discharge for several weeks after surgery is normal. Wearing adult diapers or maxi pads will help collect these fluids and prevent you from soiling your clothes. If you are concerned about the amount, colour, or smell of blood or discharge in your genital area, please refer to the information your surgeon gave you and contact your doctor if you have any concerns.

### **Kelo-cote**

Once your suture lines have dried (which is usually around 6-8 weeks post-op), you can begin applying a kelo-cote or another silicone gel that helps to reduce scarring.

# COMFORT AND CONVENIENCE

## Included in this pack:

- Bendable drinking straws
- Back scratcher
- Litter-picking stick
- Long-lead phone charger
- Lap tray
- High-protein snacks
- Sweets

Though getting mobile again as soon as possible is encouraged, you may be spending a lot of time in bed and you don't want to strain or stretch reaching for things, These items can help keep you comfy during your recovery.

## Straws

Staying hydrated is a really important part of recovery so bendable straws are ideal and make drinking much easier in those early days when moving might be difficult. To avoid any build up of bacteria, don't use an individual straw for more than one day.

## Back-scratcher

We also know that there's nothing worse than itching somewhere that you can't easily reach, so a back scratcher can be invaluable. As always, please be careful with your arm movements after surgery and take care not to lift them above your head, which might impact the healing of your scars.

## Litter picking stick and extra-long phone charger

Stretching, straining, or reaching for things could cause your wounds to open, stretch your scars, and prolong recovery. Having the things you need close by is important, but having an extra-long charger and something to grab items that are just out of reach might be useful!

## Snacks

Eating lots of protein and fibre is important, but so is enjoying yourself and having some treats to cheer you up, a good stash of snacks can help keep you going!

# **BEDDING AND CLOTHES**

## Included in this pack:

- Travel pillow (neck pillow)
- Wedge pillow
- Donut pillow
- 6 pillowcases for the donut pillow
- Soft, loose pyjama bottoms

## Pillows

As you will be spending a lot of time resting, pillows are important! A neck-pillow (travel pillow) for neck support and a wedge pillow to help keep your torso elevated if you need it are ideal. A donut pillow too, which can help alleviate pressure on your surgery site while you're recovering.

As hygiene is really important in recovery, We recommend keeping 6 regular pillow-cases which you can put over the donut pillow and you should change and wash them regularly. We recommend putting a bed sheet or large pillow case around your wedge pillow and changing it regularly so that it remains clean. Using white pillowcases and sheets will help you see sweat marks and any blood stains sooner.

## Pyjama bottoms

It's important to have loose, soft and comfortable clothing to wear on your bottom half as your surgery site will likely be painful and sensitive. It can be good to have multiple pairs that are soft and should be very comfortable so that you can change and wash them regularly.

If you get blood in any clothes or sheets, soak them in or dab them with **cold** salt water to remove the stain, then put them on a regular laundry wash. Oxy powders like Vanish are also very useful for removing stains from bodily fluids like sweat.

# **OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES**

You can find more information on lower surgery recovery in these leaflets and webpages:

<https://www.ngicns.scot.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/GRS-Vaginoplasty-Discharge-Information.pdf>

<https://thrive.kaiserpermanente.org/care-near-you/northern-california/eastbay/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2020/04/Vaginoplasty-Post-Operative-Recovery-and-Healing.pdf>

<https://www.grsmontreal.com/DATA/TEXTEDOC/8X11WEB-Vaginoplastie-2013-ASC---En-V55.pdf>

<https://www.ngicns.scot.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/GRS-Vaginoplasty-Dilating-Information.pdf>

<https://transcare.ucsf.edu/guidelines/vaginoplasty#:~:text=Since%20the%20vagina%20does%20not,when%20dilation%20is%20less%20frequent>