

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Perineal Precautions After Abdominoperineal Resection (APR)

This information will help you get ready for surgery and know what to expect after surgery.

Your rectum (where poop is stored before it leaves your body) will be completely removed during surgery. The skin will be sewn together with sutures (stitches). The surgical cut in this area is called your perineal incision.

We'll take out the sutures in your perineal incision many weeks after your surgery. The time it takes for the perineal area to heal is different for everyone. It usually takes about 3 months. You will have less discomfort over time.

Before your surgery

Please buy these items before your surgery:

- A sitz bath bowl. This is a special plastic container you place on a toilet and fill with warm water. You can buy one in many drugstores and medical supply stores.
- Pain medicine, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Advil®).
- A wound healing cream or ointment, such as Bacitracin®, Aquaphor®, or petroleum jelly (Vaseline®).

After your surgery when you are home

- Take small steps when you walk.
- **Avoid putting pressure or tension on your perineal wound.** Avoid too much bending, pushing, or pulling.
- **Do not sit upright.**
- **Do not sit in a chair.** Only lie down or use a recliner.
 - When sitting in a recliner, try to lie as flat as you can. This helps prevent direct pressure on your perineal wound. When you sit at too much of an angle, you tend to slide down in the seat. This can put pressure and tension on your wound and make it open up.

- Sleep on your side, if you can. Try to avoid sleeping on your back or stomach (belly).
- You can take warm sitz baths 2 to 3 times per day. Sit in a lukewarm bath or a sitz bath for 1 to 5 minutes. You can use lukewarm tap water with or without Epsom salts.
- You can put a cream or ointment on your perineal incision 1 to 2 times per day. You can also use it after a warm sitz bath.

What you can eat

- You can follow your normal diet.
- Drink at least 8 (8-ounce) glasses of water a day.

What can you expect when you are home?

- As your peri-anal wounds heal, they may weep (leak) fluid for a few weeks. Peri-anal wounds are the surgical cuts around where your anus (butthole) used to be.
- It usually takes about 3 months to heal. You will feel less discomfort over time.

When can you start driving?

- Do not drive until your perineal wound is fully healed.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

Perineal Precautions After Abdominoperineal Resection (APR) - Last updated on March 10, 2026
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Last Updated

March 10, 2026

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