



## GENERAL SURGICAL RISKS

### ABOUT RISKS

- We want you to understand fully the risks involved in surgery so that you can make an informed decision. Although complications are infrequent, all surgeries have some degree of risk. All of us will use our expertise and knowledge to avoid complications in so far as we are able. If a complication does occur, we will use those same skills in an attempt to solve the problem quickly. The importance of having a highly qualified medical team and the use of a certified facility cannot be overestimated.
- In general, the least serious problems occur more often and the more serious problems occur rarely. If a complication does arise, you, Dr. Shell, and the nursing staff will need to cooperate in order to resolve the problem. Most complications involve an extension of the recovery period rather than any permanent effect on your final result.

### NORMAL SYMPTOMS

- **SWELLING AND BRUISING:** Moderate swelling and bruising are normal after any surgery. Severe swelling and bruising may indicate bleeding or possible infection.
- **DISCOMFORT AND PAIN:** Mild to moderate discomfort or pain is normal after any surgery. Severe swelling and bruising may indicate bleeding or possible infection.
- **DISCOMFORT AND PAIN:** Mild to moderate discomfort or pain is normal after any surgery. If the pain becomes severe and is not relieved by pain medication, please call us at (901) 761-4844. Our answering service will page Dr. Shell if it's after hours.
- **CRUSTING ALONG THE INCISION LINES:** We usually treat this with antibiotic ointment.
- **NUMBNESS:** Small sensory nerves to the skin surface are occasionally cut when the incision is made or interrupted by undermining of the skin during surgery. The sensation in those areas gradually returns-usually within 2 or 3 months as the nerve endings heal spontaneously.
- **ITCHING:** Itching and occasional small shooting electrical sensations within the skin frequently occur as the nerve endings heal. Ice, skin moisturizers, and massages are helpful. These symptoms are common during the recovery period.

- **REDNESS OF SCARS:** All new scars are red, dark pink, or purple. Scars on the face usually fade within 3 to 6 months. Scars on the breasts or body may take a year or longer to fade completely.
- **HEMATOMA/SEROMA:** Small collections of blood or fluid under the skin are usually allowed to absorb spontaneously. Larger hematomas/seromas may require aspiration, drainage, or even surgical removal to achieve the best result.
- **INFLAMMATION AND INFECTION:** Post-surgical infection is rare as you will be given an antibiotic intravenously prior to Dr. Shell performing your surgery. If occurring, a superficial infection may require antibiotic ointment. Deeper infections are usually treated with oral antibiotics. Development of an abscess usually requires drainage.
- **THICK, WIDE, OR DEPRESSED SCARS:** Abnormal scars may occur even though we have used the most modern plastic surgery techniques. Injection of steroids into the scars, placement of silicone sheeting onto the scars, or further surgery to correct scars is occasionally necessary. Some areas on the body scar more than others, and some people scar more than others do. Our own history of scarring should give you some indication of what you can expect.
- **WOUND SEPARATION OR DELAYED HEALING:** Any incision, during the healing phase, may separate or heal unusually slow for a number of reasons. These include inflammation, infection, wound tension, decreased circulation, smoking, or excess external pressure. If delayed healing occurs, the final outcome is usually not significantly affected, but secondary revision of the scar may be indicated.
- **SENSITIVITY OR ALLERGY TO DRESSING OR TAPE:** Occasionally, allergic or sensitive reactions may occur from soaps, ointments, tape or sutures used during or after surgery. Such problems are unusual and are usually mild and easily treated. In extremely rare circumstances, allergic reactions can be severe and require aggressive treatment or even hospitalization.
- **INCREASED RISKS FOR SMOKERS:** Smokers have a greater chance of skin loss and poor healing because of decreased skin circulation.
- **INJURY TO DEEPER STRUCTURES:** Blood vessels, nerves, and muscles may be injured during surgery. The incidence of such injuries is rare.

#### RARER COMPLICATIONS

- If they are severe, any of the problems mentioned under "Common Risks" may significantly delay healing or necessitate further surgical procedures.

- Medical complications such as pulmonary embolism, severe allergic reactions to medications, cardiac arrhythmias, heart attack, and hyperthermia are rare but serious and life-threatening problems. Having a board-certified anesthesiologist or a qualified certified anesthetist present at your surgery reduced these risks as much as possible. (Failure to disclose all pertinent medical data before surgery may cause serious problems for you and for the medical team during surgery.)
- All plastic surgery treatments and operations are performed to improve a condition, a problem, or an appearance. While the procedures are performed with a very high probability of success, disappointments occur and results are not always acceptable to patients or the surgeon. Secondary treatments or procedures may be indicated. Rarely, problems may occur that are permanent.
- **POOR RESULTS:** Asymmetry, unhappiness with the result, poor healing, etc. may occur. Minimal differences are usually acceptable. Larger differences frequently require revisional surgery.