

AUSTIN-WESTON CENTER FOR COSMETIC SURGERY

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 at The Austin-Weston Center 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, your surgeon, 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.
- If you think you could be pregnant, we will administer a pregnancy test at or around the time of your surgery. If you should become pregnant immediately after surgery, the medications used during surgery could be harmful to an early pregnancy. Therefore, protected intercourse is advised. Please be advised that a very early pregnancy may not yet be detectable with a pregnancy test.

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. If the pain becomes severe and is not relieved by pain medication, please call us at 703-893-6168.
- **CRUSTING ALONG THE INCISION LINES:** Wash the area with soap and water.
- **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 frequently 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 breast or body may take a year or longer to fade completely.

COMMON RISKS

- **HEMATOMA:** Small collections of blood under the skin are usually allowed to absorb spontaneously. Larger hematomas may require aspiration, drainage, or even surgical removal to achieve the best result.
- **INFLAMMATION AND INFECTION:** A superficial infection may require antibiotic ointment. Deeper infections are treated with antibiotics. Development of an abscess usually requires drainage.

AUSTIN-WESTON CENTER FOR COSMETIC SURGERY

GENERAL SURGICAL RISKS

- **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 the scars is occasionally necessary. Some areas on the body scar more than others and some people scar more than others do. Your 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 enhancement of the scar may be indicated.
- **SENSITIVITY OR ALLERGY TO DRESSINGS OR TAPE:** Occasionally, allergic or sensitivity 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.

SMOKING RISK AND RISK OF EXPOSURE TO SECOND HAND SMOKE

- **INJURY TO DEEPER STRUCTURES:** Blood vessels, nerves and muscles may be injured during surgery. The incidence of such injuries is rare.
- **INCREASED RISKS FOR SMOKERS:** Smokers have a greater chance of skin loss and poor healing because of decrease skin circulation. Smoking reduces arterial (blood) oxygen supply which is necessary for normal wound healing.
- **SECOND HAND SMOKE:** Exposure to second hand smoke has also been implicated in delayed or abnormal wound healing. It is best to avoid smoking and second hand smoke in the peri-operative period. Not only does nicotine cause blood vessels to constrict leading to less blood supply to the wound, but carbon monoxide also displaces oxygen from hemoglobin. The combination leads to less oxygen for normal wound healing to take place.
- Avoid cigarette replacements such as the nicotine patch or nicotine gum or inhaler in the peri-operative period as these have similar effects as smoking and second hand smoke.

RARER COMPLICATIONS

- If they are severe, any of the problems mentioned under Common Risks may significantly delay healing or necessitate further surgical procedures.
- **COMPLICATIONS:** 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 which could result in death. Failure to disclose all pertinent medical data before surgery may cause serious problems for you and for the medical team during surgery.

AUSTIN-WESTON CENTER FOR COSMETIC SURGERY

GENERAL SURGICAL RISKS

- SYMPTOMS: Symptoms of rarer complications can be, but are not limited to, any of the following:

Sudden shortness of breath
Sudden intense feeling of anxiety
Chest pain
Shoulder pain
Pain radiating down the arm and/or into the neck.

- RESPONSE: Please call 911 for immediate assistance then contact our nurse on call as soon as possible at our office 703-893-6168.

UNSATISFACTORY RESULT & NEED FOR REVISIONAL SURGERY

- All plastic surgery treatment and operations are performed to improve a condition, a problem, or 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 procedures or treatments 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 revisionary surgery.

OTHER RISKS

- We have outlined the common and not-so-common risks of surgery in general. The specific risks and complications of each surgical procedure have been explained elsewhere in this preoperative packet. We have not discussed every possible problem that may occur, and you cannot assume that a problem will not occur simply because it is not discussed here.
- I acknowledge that the risks and complications of the surgery I am to undergo have been explained and discussed with me in detail by my surgeon and by the nursing staff. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and any concerns I had about my surgery have been explained to me. My signature here attests to my understanding and satisfaction with the answers I have been given.

Patient Signature: _____

Date: _____

Witness Signature: _____

Date: _____