Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm (AAA) Surgery Discharge Instructions

The surgeon who performed your surgery is: ______________________________________________

Someone should drive you home and stay with you for about a week. It will take several weeks to recover. You may feel very tired after this surgery. You will slowly get your energy back over the next several weeks.

**Incision care**
- You may have bruising, hardening and numbness around your incision. If you have leg incisions, you may have leg swelling as well. If you have leg swelling:
  - You must rest with your legs raised higher than your heart. **Propping your legs up on a stool or sitting in a recliner is not enough.**
  - For the first few weeks, lie in bed with two or three pillows under your legs. Do this for 20 to 30 minutes three to four times a day until the swelling stops.
  - If leg swelling does not improve, call the clinic.
- You may shower two to three days after your surgery. Pat the incision to dry it. You do not need to cover it with a bandage unless it is draining.
- Staples will hold your incision closed. We will remove these 10 to 14 days after surgery. After that, we may place strips of white tape (Steri-Strips) over your incision. These will curl up after 5 to 7 days, and then you may remove them.
- You may wear an abdominal (stomach) binder for comfort. The binder supports the stomach and keeps your stitches from getting irritated.
- If your incision is in the groin area (between your trunk and leg), tuck a gauze pad in the fold of the skin. This will keep the skin dry and aid healing.
- A soft, fluid-filled bulge (seroma) may appear near an incision. This is rare. It may go away on its own, or it may need to be drained in the clinic.

**Activity**
- Walking is important. Take a short walk two to three times a day. Slowly increase your distance. You can climb stairs when you feel strong enough.
- No heavy lifting or hard activity (running, biking or weight lifting) until after you see your doctor. Your doctor will discuss these at your follow-up visit.
- No driving until two weeks after surgery. You must feel strong enough to drive safely. Do not drive if you are still taking your narcotic pain pills.
- You may return to work when you feel ready. This will depend on the type of work you do. Most people are ready in four to six weeks. Ask your doctor about this at your follow-up visit.
Diet and medicines

- You may need to eat several small meals a day until your appetite returns.
- Drink 1 to 2 quarts of extra fluid a day for the next two to three days. Avoid alcohol.
- From now on, you will need to eat a diet that’s low in fat and cholesterol.
- You may use stool softeners (Colace or Senokot) as needed for constipation (hard, dry stools).
- Take all your medicines unless your doctor tells you not to.
- If you are taking Coumadin (warfarin), you must have regular blood tests (INR).
- For mild pain and other symptoms: Take 2 tablets of Advil (ibuprofen) or Tylenol (acetaminophen) three times a day. Take it with food. Do this for one week.
- For severe pain, take: _____________________________________________________.
  You may not drive or drink alcohol while taking this medicine. If you need to have this refilled, please call your pharmacy during business hours. The pharmacy will call us for approval.

Call us if you have any of these symptoms (see numbers below)

- Swelling or pain that gets worse.
- Chills, or a temperature above 101°F (38.3°C) under the tongue.
- Drainage, redness or odor around your incision.
- Numbness, tingling or coolness in your legs or feet.
- Trouble feeling a pulse in your foot or leg.
- Swelling in your legs that does not decrease after resting with your legs above your heart.

Follow-up

- See your surgeon 10 to 14 days after surgery. Set up this visit as soon as you get home.
- Every one to five years, you will need to have an ultrasound to look at your graft. Your surgeon will tell you how often to have this. We will send you a reminder each time by mail.

In the first year after surgery, you may need an antibiotic (germ-killing medicine) before certain procedures. Please call the clinic for instruction before you have dental work, minor surgery, colonoscopy, or other invasive procedures.

Other:
________________________________________________________________________________

Questions or concerns?

☐ Fairview Southdale Hospital: 952-929-6994 (Minnesota Vascular Clinic)
☐ University of Minnesota Medical Center: 612-625-3771

________________________________     ________________________________    ___________    __________
Patient                      Instructor                        Date              Time