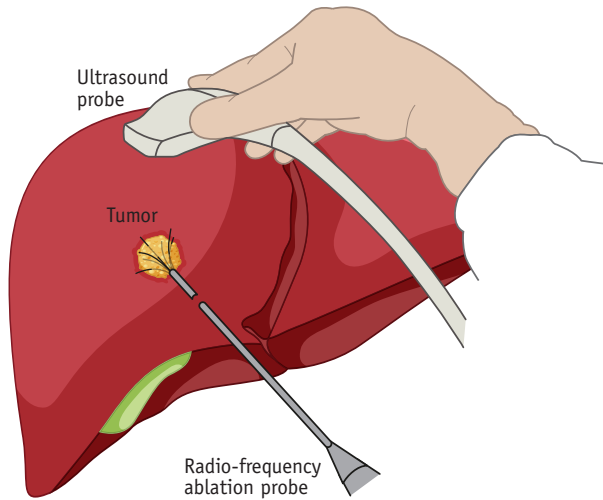


Going Home After Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA)

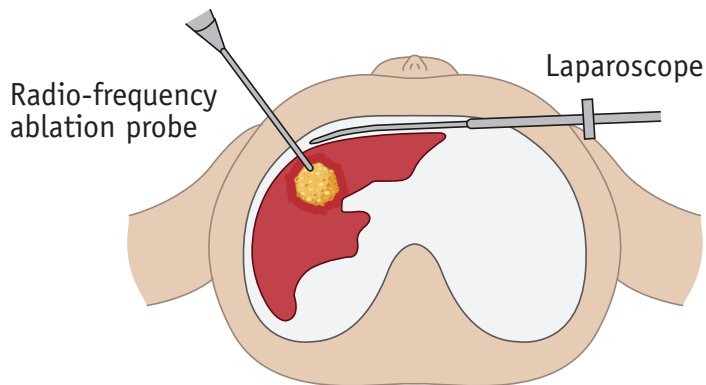


This booklet offers information for your continued recovery. It also includes answers to many questions asked by people who have had this type of surgery.

After you go home, you may find it helpful to refer to this booklet. If you have any questions about any of the information in this booklet, please contact your surgeon and/or the nurse on the unit before going home.

Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA) is a treatment used to destroy cancer tissue with heating. A needle with electrodes is inserted through the skin (**percutaneous**) into the liver tumor guided by ultrasound or CT (computer tomography) scan or laparoscopic surgery where a scope is inserted through small holes open in the belly. The photo below shows the laparoscopic technique for RFA.

The radiofrequency produces heat that kills the cancer tissue without damage to the healthy liver.



Physical Activity

Although recovery usually takes 1 to 2 weeks, each person gets better at his/her own rate. Many things affect the time it takes to feel fit again.

When you get home you may be surprised by how tired you feel. This is a normal feeling. Your energy level will improve over the next few weeks.

Why Exercise?

For the first 1 to 7 days after your surgery your body is in the process of healing.

A gradual increase of your activity will help you feel better. It will also help you heal faster and regain your confidence more quickly.



Guidelines to Help You Gradually Increase Your Activity

- Plan your day to allow time for both activity and rest.
- Walk each day. Increase your walking time or distance each day.
- For the first 7 days after your RFA, avoid heavy lifting, pushing or pulling objects that weigh more than 10 pounds. Such as: vacuuming, gardening, carrying groceries and even picking up children. Such activities can cause you to delay wound healing and possibly develop a hernia. Use your legs when you lift.

Rest and Relaxation

Rest is an important part of your recovery.

Guidelines to Help You Rest and Relax

- Alternate rest with exercise.
- Get at least 8 hours of sleep every night.
- Plan two 30 to 60 minute rest periods each day during the first week at home. These can be naps or just relaxing times.



Guidelines for your Activity

You may:

- Be driven in a car anytime.
- Drive your own car when you are able to shoulder check and you stop taking pain medications, which can make you drowsy. It is okay to drive if you are taking plain Tylenol or a Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drug (NSAID).
- Fly in an airplane anytime.
- Shower anytime. **Do not** take a bath for the first 7 days.
- Start exercise routine (gym, weights) in 3 weeks.
- Start sports (golf, tennis, running etc.) in 6 weeks.
- **Go back to work:** the amount of time it takes for one to recover depends on your health. If you are unsure, ask your family doctor or ask your surgeon during your follow-up appointment.
- **Sexual activity** uses the same amount of energy as climbing up two flights of stairs at a normal pace. Ideally, when you can climb 2 flights of stairs without getting tired and short of breath, you can return to your normal sexual activity.

Diet

It may take a few days to regain your normal appetite but it will improve as you begin to feel better. When you first go home, you may find that small meals (5 to 6 meals a day) are more pleasing to you. Since good nutrition speeds healing and lessens fatigue, try to eat a well balanced diet.



If you are sent home on a particular diet texture, please follow this diet regime as directed or until you follow-up with your surgeon.

Medications



Your surgeon may send you home with some medications. You will be provided with a prescription and be responsible for filling it from a drug store. Remember to take them as ordered and ask your pharmacist if you have any questions.

You will also be told whether you need to continue with your previous medications and when to re-start them. If by chance you are not told by the time you are discharged home, ask your family doctor.

Please **do not stop or change** your medications on your own. Your family doctor may change, re-order or stop them for you.

Avoid aspirin (in any form) as it can increase the chance of bleeding. If you usually take a regular low dose of ASA, ask your family doctor prior to taking.

Please ask your surgeon or family doctor before taking any **herbal medications** (some of them can also cause a risk of bleeding).

Pain Medication

Your surgeon will provide you with a prescription for pain medication to keep you comfortable. Keeping discomfort and pain under control helps people recover.

Take the pain medication on a regular basis as prescribed by your surgeon. Most pain medications work best if you can take them before the pain becomes too strong.

If you find that you only have pain when doing certain activities, such as walking, bathing:

Take the pain medication about 30 minutes before the activity.

If you worry about becoming addicted to your pain medication, you may want to talk to your surgeon.

Some pain medications can make people feel drowsy or dizzy. If you notice this, please **do not** drive or use power tools. It is against the law to drive while taking narcotics.

Constipation is a common problem with pain medications. To prevent constipation, eat foods that are high in fibre (bran, fresh fruits, vegetables and whole grains), drink plenty of fluids such as prune juice and water (6 to 8 glasses of water each day unless you have been told otherwise due to heart and kidney problems) and try to keep as active as you can.

- If you continue to be constipated, ask your pharmacist to recommend a mild laxative or stool softener. Try to resolve the constipation with natural foods rather than using laxatives (**not** recommended on a regular basis).

Incision Care

You may shower 24 to 48 hours after the RFA. **Do not** take a bath for the first 7 days.

As your incision sites heal they may become itchy. Avoid any rubbing or scratching as the itchiness is a normal part of the healing process. **Do not** use lotions or powder on your incisions until the skin is completely healed (approximately for 2 weeks).

In most cases, you will be sent home with dissolvable sutures to your incision sites.

If dissolvable sutures are in place, you will have white paper tapes (steri-strips) on top for extra support. **Do not** remove them yourself. After 5 to 7 days these tapes will start to become non-sticky and eventually peel and fall off. There is no need to replace them, leave the incision sites exposed to allow healing. It usually takes approximately 3 to 6 weeks to allow sutures to dissolve.

Note: When you take a **shower with steri-strips in place**, they will become wet, which is fine. All you need to do is pat dry them. If the ends of the steri-strips curl up, you can either press down on them or you can trim that portion off with scissors. If majority of the steri-strip has peeled off, you can remove that one strip.

If staples are in place, they are normally removed 7 to 10 days after surgery either by your surgeon or family doctor. Leave the incisions exposed as it heals better. You can still take a shower with staples in place.

Important to Know: Post Ablation Syndrome

You may experience the following flu-like symptoms 3 to 5 days after your RFA:

- Fever up to 38.5°C (100.5°F)
- Pain
- Chills
- Nausea

These symptoms may last 5 days. Treat these symptoms with Tylenol(Acetaminophen).

If the symptoms last more than 5 days or your fever is higher than 38.5°C, contact your surgeon.

You may continue to have showers with an open wound. A home care nurse will contact you the morning of the visit with a time. Inform the nurse, that you'll be taking a shower 30 minutes prior to that time. In doing so, you will prevent yourself from sitting in a wet dressing (cause for infections).

When you take a shower, leave the current dressing on, wrap a piece of plastic saran wrap on top and tape the edges with waterproof tape. This will allow the plastic wrap to be damp and prevent the dressing from being soaked. After your shower, you can remove the plastic wrap and leave the dressing to be changed by the nurse.



Going Home Criteria



Your stay will be 1 to 3 days after your RFA. Prior to sending you home, your surgeon will make sure your:

- Blood work is within the normal range or coming down towards the normal range
- Temperature is within the normal range
- Incision site is healing
- Minimal or no pain
- Eating safely, not necessarily as you were eating prior to coming into hospital
- Walking safely, not necessarily as you were walking prior to coming into hospital
- Able to manage at home (with or without community/family supports)

Follow-up Appointment



You need to call your surgeon's office to make a follow-up appointment. Normally a follow-up appointment is made for 4 to 6 week after going home, unless advised otherwise. During this appointment, your surgeon will review your overall recovery progress, inform you of the results of the RFA treatment report and tell you if any further treatment is required.



Please Contact your Surgeon or Family Doctor if you notice:

- Chills, fever, a temperature over 38.5°C (100.5°F) for 2 straight readings, when measured by mouth.
- Your prescribed pain medication is not relieving your pain.
- Increased redness, swelling or pus drainage from the incision sites.
- Constant bleeding or drainage from the incision sites (enough to soak a tissue or handkerchief).
- Remember: You may experience 3 to 5 days after your RFA treatment flu-like symptoms such as fever, nausea, pain and chills (Post Ablation Syndrome). If the symptoms last than more than 5 days, contact your surgeon.
- Nausea and/or vomiting that lasts beyond 24 hours.
- If you experience any pain, aching or redness in your calves or swelling of the legs, go to the nearest emergency room.

Note: If you cannot get a hold of your surgeon or family doctor, you need to contact another doctor (walk-in clinic or emergency department).

If you do come to the emergency department, it would be helpful to inform the nurse and physician that you recently had surgery, and the name of your surgeon.

