



Action Plan for Staying Healthy at Home After a Lower GI (Gastrointestinal) Bleed

This handout is a quick guide to staying healthy and safe at home. Follow these tips and all instructions from your hospital care team to help you avoid another hospital stay.

Take Your Medicines

Some special guidelines to note:

- If your doctor tells you to take an iron supplement, take it with Vitamin C tablets or orange juice. This helps the iron absorb in your body. Iron supplements may make your bowel movements very dark.
- To lower the chances of bleeding, do not take non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medicines (NSAIDs) unless approved by your doctor. NSAIDs include Ibuprofen, Advil, Naproxen, Aleve and aspirin. If you take aspirin for your heart, keep taking it as instructed by your doctor. Tylenol may be taken, as directed on the box, for minor aches and pains.
- If you are on anticoagulation (blood thinner) or antiplatelet therapy, talk to your doctor about how to best continue these medicines.

Go to Your Follow-Up Visits

It is **very** important to go to your follow-up visits with your primary care doctor or GI doctor (gastroenterologist). Your doctor needs to see you at follow-up visits to check on your progress and make sure your medicines are working. They need to see you within 1 week of your hospital stay and then at least once a month for 3 months.

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Ways to Stay Well

- Eat a healthy diet based on advice from your care team.
- Exercise – before starting any exercise program, ask your doctor if it's safe to do so.
- If need help quitting smoking:
 - Call the Ohio Quit Line at **1-800-QUIT-NOW** or visit **smokefree.gov**
 - Find out if your insurance covers our UH Tobacco Treatment Counseling program. If so, you will need a doctor's order to use this service. To learn more about our program, call **216-896-1810**.

If you have **hemorrhoids or diverticulosis**:

- Follow a high fiber diet. Try to get 20 to 35 grams of fiber each day. Good food choices include:
 - Whole grains such as barley, quinoa, whole wheat flour, wild and brown rice and oatmeal.
 - Fiber-rich fruits and vegetables, such as raspberries, pears, apples, bananas, oranges, plums/prunes, cooked artichoke, peas, broccoli, green lettuce and corn.
 - It is ok to eat nuts, popcorn and seeds such as sunflower, pumpkin, caraway and sesame. Recent research suggests that these foods are not harmful to people with diverticulosis and are thought to be healthy and safe to eat.
- It is important to avoid constipation. You should have formed but soft bowel movements on a regular basis. If you think you are constipated, talk to your doctor about medicines that may help.
- If you have hemorrhoids, do not strain while having a bowel movement or linger on the toilet – for example reading.

Hang this on your refrigerator to remind you of reasons to call your doctor or 9-1-1



GOOD TO GO

Follow the tips in this handout to help you to stay healthy and out of the hospital. Always monitor your health and be aware of the signs of new or worsening health concerns. Read below to learn when and who to call for help.



CAUTION

Call your doctor's office right away if you have any of the problems listed below. Your doctor may need to adjust your medicine doses and/or order blood tests. Keep taking your medicines as ordered until you see your doctor.

- Small amount of blood in your bowel movements or on toilet paper
- Weight loss
- Feeling more weak or tired
- Bowel movements are black or look like tar
- Belly pain or cramping that is new or getting worse
- Changes in your bowel movement pattern such as pain, diarrhea (loose, frequent bowel movements), mucus or constipation
- Bloating belly
- Any other symptom that causes concern

My doctor's name: _____

Office phone number: _____



STOP

Call 9-1-1 right away if you have any of these problems:

- Bright red blood in bowel movements
- Throwing up red or dark blood
- Feeling short of breath or it's hard to breathe
- Fainting
- Heart racing or feels like it is skipping a beat
- Feeling dizzy, lightheaded or confused