

YANA - YOU ARE NOT ALONE NOW PROSTATE CANCER SUPPORT SITE

USEFUL ITEMS FOR THOSE UNDERGOING PROSTATECTOMY SURGERY

In a discussion thread on one of the Mailing Lists, this was the suggested list of items to assemble prior to surgery for prostate cancer. The items marked with an asterisk* were considered the most useful by one man.

Hardware:

- A pair of oversized basketball type warm-up pants with snaps or zipper up the leg (to allow discreet access to the catheter and bag). Get a pair that is large enough to accommodate the large (night) bags and smaller (walking) bags - that will be provided by the hospital. A dark colour will be less likely to show wetness from any accidental leakage compared with a light colour. Fast drying material ("parachute material") is recommended if possible. This is not essential.

- I have found convertible hiking pants (pants whose lower leg can be zippered off to create a pair of shorts) to work wonderfully well while wearing a catheter. This type of pant also has a side zipper on the lower leg, which makes leg bag access a breeze. You can open the upper zipper (the one that runs around the leg) part-way to switch bags and let out the hose to the large drain bag.

- A five-gallon plastic bucket is very useful at night as a receptacle for the large night bag. The bucket may become your constant companion around the house. Get a square one if you don't already have something else.

- "Invalid" cushion (looks like an inner tube)

- * Antibiotic ointment/lubricant (Polysporin, for example) for where catheter exits (some had this supplied by their hospital). Some recommend a water-based lubricant such as KY Jelly but that tends to dry out quickly. Get gauze 4X4 pads to apply ointment.

There has been some debate about the best fluid to use. You want something slick, long lasting and certain not to damage the tube. It would be nice if it were also antibacterial. Polysporin and Erythromycin were used with no problem.

- * Alcohol swabs to clean the catheter at the tip of the penis (single use wipes designed for cleaning the skin before an injection).

- A pair of slippers or sandals or loafers.

- * Over-the-counter stool softener

- Get a haircut and trim your toenails before surgery

- Several people recommended buying, borrowing or otherwise acquiring the use of a reclining chair.

- Place a chair by the bed with the back facing the bed. Use the chair as a bedrail to help you get up. Use the seat as a bedside table to hold some of the things you want to keep handy. I would

STRONGLY suggest you test this out BEFORE you go to hospital to be certain it can take your weight as a handrail before you rely on it post-surgery!

* A pillow to hug early on to ease pain in laughing etc.

- A pillow to put between your knees while sleeping on your side.

- Grab bars in the area of the commode (don't use towel racks for grab bars!)

- Use a plastic coat hanger stuck between the mattress and box spring to hang the bag from or just place it in the bucket on the floor.

* Nice baggy, soft sweat pants or warm-ups - oversize with drawstring if the weather is warm inside the house or out of doors

- A soft bathrobe belt to make a shoulder strap to suspended the big bag if you prefer it to the "walking" bag.

* Silk/nylon/rayon boxer shorts for the period you have the catheter

- A plastic sheet to go under the bed sheets and protect the mattress once the catheter comes out. A large plastic garbage bag might work in a pinch.

- Have enough easy to prepare food on hand for 2-3 weeks

- Book(s) you've been intending to read

- Fresh batteries for your TV remote

- A cordless phone and up-to-date phone list

- Some big baggy mesh shorts (in summer)

* Suspenders may be helpful, in place of a belt

- Two dozen inexpensive white washcloths (in a big bundle)

- Some of the little plastic, stick-on hooks to put in the shower etc., for a place to hang the bag or simply the pail, placed outside the tub.

- A watch or interval timer to remind you not to stay sitting too long. The small kitchen timers would work for this and to prompt you to get up periodically at night if you need to do so.

. An electronic thermometer (about \$10) for keeping track of your temperature for a couple weeks postoperatively.

- A walking stick may prove to be helpful.

* A safety bench (maybe a plastic lawn chair?) for the shower (sometimes you're a little light-headed when you first come home and it's nice to have something to sit on)

- A raised seat to put over the toilet (as an alternative, or in addition to, grab bars)
- A grabber for picking things up if you drop them so you wouldn't have to bend down.
- If you have the hardware, fill up a MP3 player with your favorite tunes & use headphones to help "drown-out" the hospital noise.
- A "toilet seat lifter". I would be inclined to bend a coat hanger into a hook that I could work under the lip and lift, but there are probably commercial step-on type mechanical devices akin to garbage can lid lifters out there. Just use a stick or bend at the knees, keeping the back straight. Heck, just leave the lid up for a few days.
- One person indicated his hospital made him wear a pair of anti-embolism stockings the whole time he was there. He bought another pair when he went home and suggests considering doing the same.
- Drinking straws - you will want some for the first week.
- Plastic cups - they're lighter than glass
- Extra pillows - for sitting up in bed and as arm rests at night and for the couch.
- * Velcro Foley straps - the walking bag can slip down your leg and pull on the tube.
- A current phone list - one of contact people who must know, one of friends to come visit you, walk, and meals, shop for you. Spread the burden.
- A few woman's (not a few women's- get them from one woman) menstrual pads - don't be shy, the big ones, they're smaller, cheaper than incontinence pads and can be added to the diaper and changed more often.
- Travel bag - like a baby changing bag for when you go out or the keep women's pads in your pocket.
- Viva paper towels - to help when wet - they're soft.
- Toilet wipes - the first few times they're nice, along with baby wipes for everything.
- To deal with the rash and itch consider getting tubes of Desitin and/or Butt Paste, both containing zinc oxide.
- Diet plan - coffee is bad for bladder, eat more fruit, less meat, no cheese & bananas while on stool softeners. Diet and supplements are part of permanent recovery plan.