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General Risks of Surgery

This is an informed-consent document that has been prepared to help you understand the risks of surgery that you are considering.

Healing Issues: Certain medical conditions, dietary supplements, medications, and smoking may delay and interfere with healing.

Wound Complications: This would include infections, wound separation and tissue or skin loss. This would also include delayed healing.

Bleeding: This can occur in any surgery and risks are increased when you are taking aspirin, anti-inflammatories such as ibuprofen, or certain herbal products such as ginger, garlic, ginseng and ginkgo biloba. If the bleeding is excessive, it could require blood transfusions to stabilize.

Scarring: All surgery will leave a scar, some more visible than others. Sutures and staples can also leave some scarring. If the scarring is excessive or offensive to you, scar revisions may be pursued.

Contour irregularities: Contour and shape irregularities may always develop. This would include “dog ears” and undulations in the skin. Revisions at potential additional costs may be pursued to correct these.

Asymmetry: One side of your body may not match the other side following a procedure. Though most people are naturally asymmetric, an appreciable asymmetry can certainly occur.

Skin Discoloration/Swelling: Bruising and swelling are normal occurrences after surgery and are expected to resolve with time. In rare occasions, skin discoloration could be permanent.

Skin Sensitivity: Itching, tenderness or exaggerated responses to hot and cold may occur but this usually resolves with time.

Sutures: Buried sutures may sometimes work their way to the surface or create a stitch abscess. This is usually a self-limiting problem and easily managed in the office.

Damage to deeper structures: There is always potential to damage deeper structures such as nerves in the face, intestines with tummy surgery, or lungs with breast surgery. This is a very rare occurrence and may require additional interventions should it occur.

Fat Necrosis: Fatty tissue under the skin could lose its blood supply and die. It will result in some lumpiness or firmness in the skin that should slowly improve or diminish with time.

Seroma: Fluid collections can always occur in any spaces created by surgery. Should this occur, office aspirations can usually manage it until resolution. On rare occasions, a procedure may be required to manage it.

Surgical Anesthesia: There are always risks with anesthesia, including allergic reactions, malignant hyperthermia, and even death. If you are having an anesthesiologist/nurse anesthetist, they will discuss this further with you.

Shock: In rare circumstances, excessive blood, fluid loss, or infections could result in shock. Should this occur, hospitalization and additional interventions will be necessary.

Pain: All procedures will produce some pain. In rare occasions, chronic pain can also develop. Should this occur, you will be referred to a pain specialist.

Cardiac and Pulmonary Complications: Cardiac (heart) problems including a heart attack can occur with any anesthetic. Blood clots or fat (if having liposuction) can enter the blood stream and travel to the lungs causing an emboli. Injury to the lung during surgery can cause a collapse. *If you experience shortness of breath, chest pains, or unusual heart beats following your procedure, you must seek medical attention immediately.*

Venous thrombosis: Clotting can occur in your veins following surgery. These can resemble cords and usually occur around your IV site or under your breasts. Contact your doctor if you believe this is occurring. It is usually self-limiting and will resolve with time.

Allergic Reactions: Local allergies or reactions can occur from tapes, ointments, or dressings that are applied to your wounds. Severe allergic responses can occur following the use of drugs during and after surgery. Severe reactions may require additional treatment.

Swelling: Swelling can occur following surgery, especially if they involve surgery of your lymphatic system.

Unsatisfactory result: Although good results are expected, there is no guarantee or warranty expressed or implied, on the results that may be obtained. If results are not up to your expectations, revisions may always be pursued at additional costs, depending on how extensive the revision is.

Smoking: Patients who are currently smoking or using tobacco or nicotine products are at greater risk for significant surgical complications of skin dying, delayed healing and additional scarring in addition to bleeding. Exposure to second-hand smoke is equally dangerous. In addition, anesthetic risks increase if you are a smoker.

Travel and Special Events: complications can alter travel plans if scheduled closely following a procedure; please discuss with your doctor if you plan to travel after your procedure as there are no guarantees you will recover in time for your trip or event.

Obesity: Being overweight increases risks for many of the aforementioned complications, especially wound complications. If weight loss is possible before surgery, it is advisable that you do so to the best of your ability.

Disclaimer: Informed-consent documents are used to communicate information about the proposed surgical treatment of a disease or condition along with disclosure of risks and alternative forms of treatment(s), including not having surgery. The informed-consent process attempts to define principles of risk disclosure that should generally meet the needs of most patients in most circumstances. This should not be considered all inclusive in defining other methods of care and risks encountered. This is not intended to define or serve as the standard of medical care.