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Hiatal Hernia

Patient name: _____

Admission: _____

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I. The client/caregiver has a basic understanding of the anatomy of the esophagus, stomach, and diaphragm.

- A. The diaphragm is a large sheet of muscle that separates the abdomen from the chest cavity.
- B. The esophagus (the food tube) extends down through a small opening in the diaphragm to connect to the stomach.
- C. The stomach lies just below the diaphragm.

II. The client/caregiver can define a hiatal hernia.

- A. Hernias occur when one part of the body protrudes through a gap or opening into another part.
- B. Hiatal hernia occurs when the muscle tissue surrounding this opening becomes weak and the upper part of the stomach bulges through the diaphragm into the chest cavity.

III. The client/caregiver can list factors that may increase the risk of hiatal hernia.

- A. Congenital weakness
- B. Advanced age
- C. Smoking
- D. Prolonged illness
- E. Obesity
- F. Pregnancy
- G. Tumors
- H. Restrictive clothing
- I. Heavy lifting

IV. The client/caregiver can recognize the signs and symptoms of hiatal hernia, although the condition frequently exists without symptoms.

- A. Heartburn (burning sensation in the esophagus)
- B. Belching
- C. Regurgitation of sour tasting liquid in the mouth

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- D. Difficulty swallowing because of muscle spasms
- E. Chest pain
- F. Symptoms become worse when leaning forward, straining, lifting heavy objects, lying down, and during pregnancy.

V. The client/caregiver can list measures to manage or prevent symptoms.

- A. Nutritional measures
 - 1. Avoid caffeine, coffee, soda, chocolate, and so forth.
 - 2. Avoid onions, spicy foods, spearmint, and peppermint.
 - 3. Limit citrus fruits and tomato-based foods.
 - 4. Limit fatty foods.
 - 5. Eat small, frequent meals.
 - 6. Increase fluids.
 - 7. Increase fiber to prevent constipation.
- B. Drink water after meals to cleanse the esophagus.
- C. Wait at least 3 hours after eating before going to bed or lying down.
- D. Avoid eating before going to bed at night.
- E. Do not exercise immediately after eating.
- F. Avoid smoking.
- G. Lose weight if you are overweight.
- H. Elevate the head of your bed. Raise the head of the bed 6 to 9 inches. Use blocks to raise the bed or a foam wedge to raise the mattress. Do not use pillows because they will increase pressure on your abdomen.
- I. Avoid wearing tight clothing.
- J. Discuss medications with physician for possible causes of heartburn. Do not use over the counter medications without physician approval.
- K. Reduce stress by relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, meditation, tai chi, or yoga.

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- L. Avoid heavy lifting.
- M. Take medications as ordered.
- N. Keep follow-up appointments with physician.

VI. The client/caregiver can list possible complications.

- A. Gastroesophageal reflux disease
- B. Ulceration of the herniated portion of the stomach
- C. Gastritis
- D. Lung aspiration
- E. Slow bleeding and iron-deficiency anemia

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