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The effect of gum chewing, early oral hydration, and early mobilization on intestinal motility after caesarean birth

Fusun Terzioglu
Istinye University, Turkey

Aims and objectives: The aim of this study was to determine the effects of chewing gum, early oral hydration and early mobilization on time of first bowel sounds, first passage of flatus and first defecation following abdominal gynecologic surgery.

Background: A major complication of abdominal surgical procedures is paralytic ileus which results in patient discomfort, prolonged length of hospital stay, and increased cost of treatment. Design: Prospective randomized case-control study

Methods: Women who underwent abdominal gynecological surgery for benign disorders under general anesthesia were randomized into 8 groups according to different combinations of interventions consisting of chewing gum, early oral hydration and early mobilization. The effects of these interventions on the time of first bowel sounds, first passage of flatus and first defecation following abdominal gynecologic surgery were investigated. The data were analyzed using chi-square tests, t test for independent samples, Tukey HSD test, pair wise comparison test, one-way analysis of variance.

Results: It was found that the time when bowel sounds were heard was shorter, the time first passage of flatus was shorter and first defecation occurred earlier in the 1st group of women who chew gum, was hydrated orally and were mobilized early after surgery than the other groups. It was also determined that these periods were longest in the women who did not receive any intervention and received the routine hospital care when compared with other groups. Duration of hospital stay was shorter in the women who chew gum, was hydrated orally and was mobilized early than the other groups.

Conclusions: Early oral feeding, early mobilization and chewing gum are effective methods in terms of preventing paralytic ileus following abdominal gynecological surgery, improving patient comfort and shortening the duration of hospitalization.

Relevance to clinical practice: Nurses may cause early recovery, improve the patient comfort, prevent paralytic ileus and shorten the duration of hospitalization after gynecologic abdominal surgery by recommending gum chewing, early mobilization and early hydration.

fterzioglu@istinye.edu.tr