**Recovery after surgery**

The first 72 hours after surgery are the most critical. This is when the intestines are trying to reorganize themselves from being manipulated, cut open, et cetera. As a result the intestines sometimes stop moving, which is very painful for the horse. Also, if the circulation to the intestines was cut off for too long, the lining of the intestines sometimes reacts by becoming inflamed, or dies, resulting in severe diarrhea. If the horse had intestine cut out, the site of reattachment may fail, causing either another blockage or rupture at the site. After surgery the horse’s immune system is compromised from stress, and infection is a concern. Laminitis, although rare, may also occur.

After the first 72 hours, other long-term complications can set in. Scar tissue formation, adhesions and intestinal constriction may decrease the motility of the intestines and cause more colics. Persistent diarrhea from salmonella infections, microflora imbalance or inflammation of the lining of the colon, is a possibility. Horses may become hard keepers and require additional supplements to maintain. Hernias or infections along the incision line on the belly are also possible.

With the improved surgical techniques and experienced surgeons we have today, a great majority of horses get to go home after colic surgery and make a full recovery. Typically horses need 90 days to recover after colic surgery. The first 30 days are stall rest and hand walking, which allow the intestines and the incision line to strengthen up. The following 30 days are light turnouts in small paddocks or sun pens. The final 30 days are light exercise under saddle, mostly walking or easy trotting.

Reference: <http://www.horsechannel.com/horse-health/colic-surgery-guide-20107.aspx>