

# Improving Your Recovery: Before, During and After Your Surgery



Allina Health



## What You Need To Know Before Surgery

During surgery, your body will go through many changes. These may include changes in:

- fluid and electrolyte levels
- nutrition
- body strength.

Research has shown that many of these changes can be lowered or avoided by following certain steps.

### Understand the importance of fluids and nutrition

Usually before surgery, you take a laxative to clean out your colon. This can cause dehydration. When fluids are reduced too fast it can cause problems with your heart, kidneys and blood pressure.

To prevent this from happening, you can eat your normal diet the day before your surgery. When you arrive at the hospital, you may need to have an enema to remove the stool from your colon. This causes fewer changes to your fluid and electrolyte levels and makes for safer anesthesia and surgery.

It is important to eat well before your surgery. If you don't eat well, it can cause changes to your hormone levels. These changes can happen fast and cause your immune system to become weak. They can also cause problems with healing after surgery.

If you did not drink the special clear liquid with carbohydrates mailed to you before surgery, you can drink it 2 hours before your surgery at the hospital. This will help hormone changes from happening too fast.

You will heal faster if you keep your fluid levels up, your hormone levels normal and control your blood glucose (sugar).

## **Food and Liquid Directions Before Surgery**

The following are based on your arrival time to the hospital, not your scheduled surgery time.

These directions are based on your scheduled arrival time. Not following these directions could mean your procedure will be delayed or canceled.

### **Alcohol and tobacco: 24 hours**

- Do not drink any alcohol 24 hours before your scheduled arrival time.
- Do not smoke, vape, use chewing tobacco or use any other tobacco products up to 24 hours before your scheduled arrival time.

### **Regular foods: 8 hours**

- Eat your regular foods up to 8 hours before your scheduled arrival time.

### **Light solid foods: 6 hours**

- You may eat light solid foods up to 6 hours before your scheduled arrival time. A light meal is:
  - juice or coffee with milk or cream
  - 1 piece of toast **or** 1 bowl of oatmeal or hot cereal.
- Do not eat any nuts or nut butters.
- Do not eat foods that are heavy or high in fat such as meat or fried foods.

## **Clear liquids: 2 hours**

- Drink only clear liquids up to 2 hours before your scheduled arrival time.
  - Drink water, fruit juice without pulp, black coffee, clear pop or tea.
  - Do not have milk, yogurt or energy drinks.

## **Medicines**

- Take your medicines as directed with a small sip of water.

## **Guidelines for babies**

- **6 hours** before the scheduled arrival time
  - you may give formula.
- **4 hours** before the scheduled arrival time
  - you may give breastmilk.

## **Drink nutritional supplements**

You may need to drink nutritional supplements before your surgery. Your doctor may recommend that you drink a supplement two times each day for 10 days before your surgery. Examples are: Boost<sup>®</sup>, Ensure<sup>®</sup> and Carnation<sup>®</sup> Instant Breakfast<sup>®</sup>.

It may be helpful to try different flavors or brands. You can drink them chilled or over ice. Use the daily journal on page 7 to track the nutritional supplements you drink.

## Take your medicines

Before your surgery, your doctor will review the medicines that you are currently taking. He or she will give you a list of your medicines that you need to:

- take before surgery
- stop taking before surgery and when to stop taking them.

If you have diabetes and are on insulin, ask your doctor about how much insulin to take before surgery.

Check with your doctor if you are taking blood-thinning medicines (such as aspirin, warfarin (Coumadin®), Plavix® or Ticlid®). You may need to stop taking them within certain times before surgery. Your doctor will tell you how long to be off these medicines.

Your surgeon may want you to start taking a heart medicine one week before your surgery. This medicine can help reduce the risk of heart trouble during surgery. Not all patients need to take this medicine. Some patients only need to take this medicine for a short time. Other patients may need to take this medicine for a longer period of time. Your regular doctor will talk about this with you.

Ask your doctor or nurse if you have any questions about taking medicines before your surgery.

## **Cleanse your skin for your surgery**

You may be asked to cleanse your skin before your surgery with a special soap. This will remove bacteria on the skin and help prevent infection. Tell your doctor if you find any scrapes, infected hair follicles, rash or reddened areas on your skin or your abdomen.

## **The Day of Your Surgery**

- When you arrive at the hospital, you will be given a special clear liquid with carbohydrates to drink.
- You may need to have an enema to remove stool from your colon.
- You will be able to eat and drink after your surgery as soon as it is safe. This is usually within 4 to 6 hours after your surgery.
- It is important to get up to walk during your hospital stay. Every day that you stay in bed can cause you to lose two percent of your muscle mass. Being active will help prevent blood clots in your legs and help your bowel function return to normal.

Your health care team will help you stay as active as possible during your stay. You will also do as many things for yourself as possible. This will help you stay independent and go home sooner.

## **Managing Your Pain**

Your health care team is committed to helping you get well and manage your pain.

Pain is your body's response to injury, illness or surgery. It can come on suddenly (acute) or last a long time (chronic). Pain can be constant or it can come and go.

Pain affects every part of your life: eating, sleeping, work, interests and relationships. It can cause you to be stressed, depressed, tired or angry.

Pain is unique. No two people feel pain in the same ways. Pain that is intense to one person may be mild to another.

### **Your role in managing pain**

You are the only one who knows where and how severe your pain is. You have a key role in managing your pain.

If you have pain, tell your nurse or doctor. Your health care team will create a pain relief plan to meet your needs.

Tell your nurse or doctor:

- what makes your pain better or worse
- what methods of pain control have worked or have not worked well in the past
- if your pain starts to get worse
- if you feel new pain.

Your nurse will work with you to establish an appropriate pain goal during your hospital stay.



## **Epidural Analgesia (for Pain Relief)**

Before surgery, an anesthesiologist (who specializes in anesthesia and pain management) will place an epidural (small plastic tube) in your back. An epidural is a catheter that delivers medicines to the nerves near your spine. It is used to control your pain after surgery.

You will also be able to take pain medicine by mouth. This may include medicines such as acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or nabumetone (Relafen®).

Once your pain is controlled enough by the epidural, the catheter will be removed. You will then be given pain medicine to take by mouth to help control your pain.

## **When You Leave the Hospital**

- If you have nausea or vomiting and are unable to keep liquids or food down, call your surgeon at \_\_\_\_\_ . You may need to come back the hospital to get fluids by intravenous (IV) line.
- Do not drive until you are no longer taking a prescription pain medicine and when your incision is comfortable enough to let you step on the brake quickly. Ask your doctor when you can start driving.
- As soon as you are able, return to your regular diet. Protein helps your body heal and repair damaged tissues. If you can, eat three meals each day. If you feel like you are getting full too quickly, it may be helpful to eat six small meals each day instead.

## Follow-up Appointment

You will have a follow-up appointment with your surgeon about two weeks after your surgery. During this appointment, ask your surgeon:

- when you can return to work
- when your lifting restrictions will end
- when you can drive.

## Your Daily Journal

A very important part of your recovery is to keep a daily journal. This journal will help you create goals and track the steps you are making toward your recovery.

Check off each goal you complete. Write down any questions or concerns in your journal. Talk about these questions or concerns with your nurse or surgeon.

### First Can

### Second Can

	Date	Time	Date	Time
Day 1				
Day 2				
Day 3				
Day 4				
Day 5				
Day 6				
Day 7				
Day 8				
Day 9				
Day 10				

# Daily Journal

## Before your surgery

Today's date \_\_\_\_\_

1. Nutritional supplement needed:

yes       no

If yes, write down the date and time you had your nutritional supplement. Your doctor may recommend that you drink a supplement two times each day for 10 days before your surgery. Follow any instructions your doctor gives you.

## Pre-surgery teaching appointment

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

## Pre-surgery history and physical exam

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

## The night before your surgery

Did you wash your skin using a special soap the evening before your surgery?

yes       no

## The day of your surgery

Today's date \_\_\_\_\_

1. Write down the time you spent out of bed. Your goal is 2 hours.

---

---

---

2. Your goal is to walk in the hall at least 1 time today.

walk 1

3. Write down all the liquids you drink and the amount.

---

---

---

4. Nutritional supplement: Your goal is to have 1 can today.

1 can

5. Write down:

- any concerns, comments or questions you have about the goals for today
- anything you want to talk about with your nurse or surgeon.

---

---

---

**First day after your surgery**

Today's date \_\_\_\_\_

1. Write down the time you spent out of bed. Your goal is 8 hours.

---

---

---

2. Your goal is to walk in the hall at least four times today.

- walk 1     walk 2     walk 3     walk 4

3. Write down all the liquids you drink and the amount.

---

---

---

4. Nutritional supplement: Your goal is to have 2 cans today.

1 can       1 can

5. Write down:

- any concerns, comments or questions you have about the goals for today
- anything you want to talk about with your nurse or surgeon.

---

---

---

**Second day after your surgery**

Today's date \_\_\_\_\_

1. Write down the time you spent out of bed. Your goal is 8 hours.

---

---

---

2. Your goal is to walk in the hall at least 4 times today.

- walk 1     walk 2     walk 3     walk 4

3. Write down all the liquids you drink and the amount.

---

---

---

4. Nutritional supplement: Your goal is to have 2 cans today.

- 1 can     1 can

5. Write down:

- any concerns, comments or questions you have about the goals for today
- anything you want to talk about with your nurse or surgeon.

---

---

---



Allina Health

[allinahealth.org](http://allinahealth.org)

© 2019 ALLINA HEALTH SYSTEM. TM – A TRADEMARK OF ALLINA HEALTH SYSTEM.  
OTHER TRADEMARKS USED ARE OWNED BY THEIR RESPECTIVE OWNERS  
THIS BOOKLET DOES NOT REPLACE MEDICAL OR PROFESSIONAL ADVICE, IT IS ONLY A GUIDE.

surg-ah-25068 (11/19)