

# Guidelines for a Better Surgery Recovery

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Planning for a quick recovery from surgery starts now. This handout explains the **Enhanced Recovery after Surgery program, also known as ERAS**. This program includes the latest and greatest ways to recover from surgery. Research has shown that doing the tasks in this program may help you recover faster and with fewer problems.

**You** play a very important role in your recovery. In fact, many of these tasks are yours to complete. If you have questions about your specific surgery or the ERAS program, ask a member of your surgery team.

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# Things to do Before Surgery



**Follow any instructions from your surgeon's office.**



**Quit smoking.** This goes for whether you smoke, chew, or vape many times a day, or only once in a while. Tobacco causes **major** problems with healing. It damages the blood vessels that carry oxygen around your body and you need oxygen to heal. Quit at least 2 weeks before surgery and while you are healing. We know it is not easy – if you need help, ask a member of your health care team.



**Quit drinking alcohol.** Doing so can help you heal faster and avoid problems like slow wound healing. If you need help to stop drinking alcohol, ask a member of your health care team.



**Ask your surgeon if you need to follow a special diet.** Your surgeon suggests that you take certain supplement drinks before surgery. These drinks can help your body heal better and lower your chances of problems after surgery, such as infection. The drinks are protein supplements taken the week before surgery and a sugary (carb-loading) drink for the night before and the morning of surgery.

Any protein helps your body heal, so eating high protein foods like grilled chicken or eggs can also help your recovery.



Follow any dietary instructions that you are given from your surgeon and/or pre-admission testing.



**Exercise.** Exercise helps you gain strength and improves blood flow, which can help you heal faster. See pages 3-5 for exercises to do before surgery.

# Exercises to Do Before Surgery

Exercise helps you gain strength and improves blood flow, which can help you heal faster.

## Exercise key points

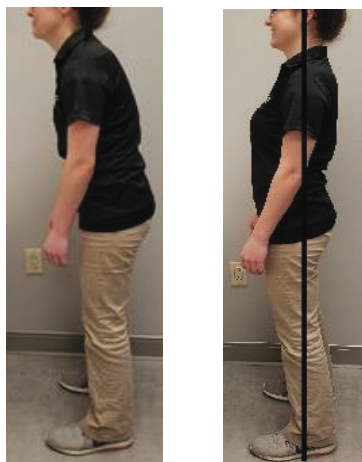
**Be active but careful.** Take extra rest breaks throughout the day. Try to find a balance between being active and letting your body heal. Ask family and friends for help.

**Listen to your body!** If you feel sharp pain during or after exercise, decrease the intensity or stop the exercise. If you push through without taking cues from your body, you may cause harm to your body.

**Aim for quality over quantity.** Having good form with exercise is more important than how many exercises you complete.

**Use good posture.** Good posture helps lessen stress and strain on your body. To practice upright posture, imagine a string is attached to the top of your head and it is being pulled straight up. The goal is to align your head, chest, and pelvis so that you are not slumped forward.

**Poor posture      Good posture**



## **2 weeks before surgery:**

### **Start aerobic and breathing exercises**

#### **Walking**

Try to do 15 to 30 minutes of light walking at least 3 times a week. This improves blood flow and is key for a faster recovery.



#### **Aerobic exercises**

Aerobic exercise refers to activity that gets your heart beating faster. Plan to do aerobic exercise, in the form of walking, before and after surgery. If you do other aerobic exercise such as running, biking or swimming, ask your surgeon if it's ok to keep doing those things before surgery.

If it's easy to talk while exercising, you are exercising at the right intensity. If it becomes hard to talk, take a break, slow down or walk a shorter distance.

#### **Breathing exercises**

Breathing exercises can help strengthen your core (belly) muscles.

Your diaphragm is a dome-shaped muscle that sits below your lungs. It helps you breathe. Diaphragmatic breathing is a deep breathing technique. It can help make your diaphragm stronger, promote relaxation and improve your blood pressure. See page 5 for step by step instructions.

## Seated diaphragmatic breathing – Do 6 to 8 repetitions (reps) 3 times a day.

Your diaphragm is a dome-shaped muscle that sits below your lungs. It helps you breathe. Diaphragmatic breathing is a deep breathing technique. It can help make your diaphragm stronger, promote relaxation and improve your blood pressure.

### Follow these steps

1. Find a comfortable position – sit in a chair with feet on floor and shoulders relaxed.
2. Put one hand on your upper chest, near your breast-bone. Put second hand higher on your abdomen - over your belly button/navel. See photo for proper technique.
3. Take an easy breath in through your nose. Pause with the breath in your lungs. Then, allow for a relaxed exhale through your lips. Like you are blowing out birthday candles.
4. Try this for 3 breaths. Notice if your upper or lower hand moves more during your breath in.
5. Take another breath. As you breathe in, your lower hand should move outward.
6. As you exhale, or breathe out, your lower hand should move back into a resting position. See if you can decrease any movement of your upper hand.
7. Try this for **6 to 8** breaths. Work your way up to **3 to 5 minutes** of this breathing.



**Step 2 technique**



**Stop if you have shortness of breath, pain, are dizzy, or feel**

# Your ERAS Hospital Stay

## Pain control

Right before surgery, you meet with a member of the anesthesia team to talk about their plan for you. They may give you a shot with numbing medicine and/or pills, to help control pain after surgery.

Some pain after surgery is normal, but your health care team has many ways to help manage your pain. We try to avoid using pain medicines called opioids or narcotics because they can cause many side effects, like nausea, throwing up and constipation.

## Recovery in the hospital

You will spend some time in the hospital after surgery, but home is a better place to recover. If you follow the steps in the checklist on [page 7](#), you may be able to go home sooner.



As soon as your surgeon says it is ok:

- Continue the walking and breathing exercises you were doing before surgery
- Start the strength-training exercises on pages 8-10

## Discharge goals

Most often, you can leave when you:

- Can take in and keep down fluids, foods and medicines
- Can walk safely on your own
- Have your pain under control with pills
- Do not have a fever



# Hospital Recovery Checklist

## Drink and eat

Drinking and eating helps your bowels wake up, helps you poop, and prevents bloating and pain.

- Drink coffee, tea, and liquids as ordered
- Drink nutrition shakes if ordered
- Eat as soon as you are allowed to eat a meal
- Eat all meals in a chair
- Chew gum



## Move and breathe

Moving is one of the most important things you can do to help yourself after surgery. It helps speed up your healing and can help prevent problems like blood clots or pneumonia. Even if you are tired, it is good to move as much as you can.



**You have a higher chance of falling in the hospital after surgery. Ask us for help when you are getting up or walking.**

- Get out of bed once on the day of surgery
- Starting the first day after surgery, walk 4 to 6 times a day
- Starting the first day after surgery, spend at least 6 hours out of bed each day
- Use your incentive spirometer (breathing device) 10 times each hour you're awake



# Home Recovery Checklist

- Don't smoke
- Keep your follow up appointments
- Follow your discharge instructions
- Know who to call if you have any questions or concerns
- Keep moving and doing the breathing exercises you started before surgery
- Do the strength-training exercises listed below



## Strength-training exercises to do after surgery

Plan to do all of these strength-training exercises after surgery. Exercise and being active after surgery can help prevent problems like blood clots and pneumonia.

5 strength-training exercises to do once or twice a day:

### **Kegel/Pelvic floor contractions**

For this exercise, squeeze (contract) the muscles of your pelvic floor, to make them stronger. This can help prevent or manage bowel and bladder leakage during activity. It can also provide support and stability to your spine, pelvis and internal organs. You can do Kegel exercises while lying down, sitting or standing.

#### **Tips for success**

Breathe normally. Count out loud to help make sure you are not holding your breath.

Relax your stomach, butt, and leg muscles. Only use the muscles of your pelvic floor.



## Follow these steps

1. Squeeze and lift the muscles in your pelvis, like you are trying to hold in your pee (urine) or not pass gas. **Hold this position for 5 seconds. As you are able, slowly increase the hold to 10 seconds.**
2. Relax your pelvic muscles for 10 seconds.
3. Repeat 10 to 15 times.

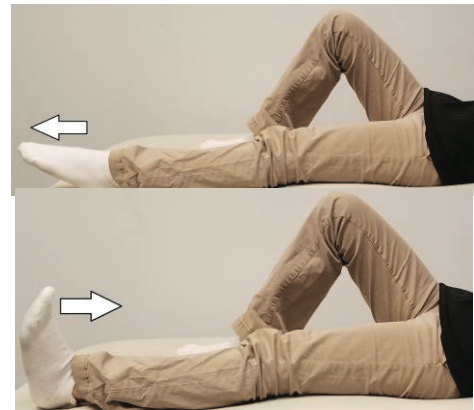


Lying on your back with bent knees is the easiest position to start in.

## Ankle pumps

### Follow these steps

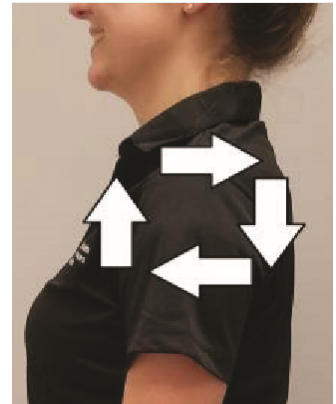
1. Lie on your back and straighten 1 leg.
2. Point your toes away from you.
3. Pull your toes back towards your nose.
4. Repeat 10 to 15 times.
5. Do steps 1 through 4 with your other leg.



## Shoulder rolls

### Follow these steps

1. Sit or stand.
2. Slowly roll your shoulders up, backwards and down in a circle.
3. Repeat 10 to 15 times.
4. Do steps 1 through 3 with your other shoulder.



## Quadriceps sets

### Follow these steps

1. Lie down and straighten 1 leg.
2. With the straight leg, tighten your quadriceps by pushing the back of your knee down for 5 seconds. Keep your butt and calf muscles relaxed.
3. Repeat 10 to 15 times.
4. Do steps 1 through 3 with your other leg.



## Gluteus sets

### Follow these steps

1. Lie, sit or stand in a comfortable position.
2. Squeeze your butt muscles together.
3. Hold for 5 seconds.
4. Repeat 10 to 15 times.

