

# Before and After Your Gynecological Surgery

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## *Your Guide to a Healthy Recovery*

A scheduler will call you a few days to a week before surgery. They will let you know when to arrive. Please write down this information during your call:

**Your surgery is at:** \_\_\_\_\_ **a.m./p.m. on:** \_\_\_\_\_ **(date)**

Arrival Time: \_\_\_\_\_ a.m./p.m.

Where to check in: \_\_\_\_\_



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**Enhanced recovery is a program designed to help you recover from surgery safely and return to your normal activities as quickly as possible.**

Thank you for choosing us for your surgery. Your health and well-being are of utmost importance to us. We are committed to providing you and your family with the best possible care.

**Please keep this book.** It will be your guide throughout your surgery preparation and recovery. It should help answer any questions you may have.

Look for these symbols in the book:

**!** **Remember to ...** These “to-do” items remind you of the tasks that will help you get the best results from your surgery or treatment.

**?** **Did you know ...** These facts help you better understand your care.

 **Expert tip ...** Wisdom from people who know: Past patients as well as health care providers.

## Part 1: What to expect

### Goals for a healthy recovery

Everyone on your care team (primary care doctor, surgeon, anesthesiologist, nurses) will work toward giving you a smooth recovery. Our role in your recovery includes:

- Helping you understand the surgery process from start to recovery, including how to prepare for it.
- Reducing the physical stress of surgery. This means:
  - Drinking clear liquids up to 2 hours before arrival
  - Eating up to 8 hours before arrival.
- Helping you avoid nausea (feeling sick to your stomach).
- Eating and moving around earlier after surgery.
- Using multiple methods to control your pain. This will help you eat, drink, and move around better after surgery. You'll also need less opioid pain medicines, so you'll have fewer side effects.

### What type of pain medicine will I have?

You will meet with an anesthesiologist (pain doctor) the day of your surgery to talk about the type of pain medicine you will need. You'll go over the risks and benefits, what to expect, and any questions or concerns you may have.

Four methods are used to control pain during surgery:

- **Sedation** - medicine given through an IV to relax you.
- **Local anesthesia** - an injection to numb the surgery site.
- **Regional anesthesia** - an injection that numbs your body from the chest down. It is usually given into your back.
- **General anesthesia** - medicine that puts you to sleep for the entire surgery.

#### ? Did you know

We aim to make surgery seem less like surgery.

 **Expert Tips:**

- Your care team will explain each step of your surgery.
- An interpreter is available (in person, or by phone or video).
- We can provide voice amplifiers to help you hear or speak.

*If you have a surgical cut on your belly*

You may have a **TAP block** to lessen any pain from your surgical cut (incision). This is an injection in your belly while you are sedated. You won't feel it. The TAP block can help numb the incision for 24 to 72 hours, depending on the type of medicine used. Reducing the pain from your incision means you'll need less opioid pain medicine. It will also make it easier to move, walk, and care for yourself.

**Will I stay overnight in the hospital?**

Most patients go home the day of surgery. Sometimes, depending on the type of surgery you have, you may need to stay for 1 or 2 nights in the hospital. Your surgeon will discuss this with you before your surgery.

**What can I expect while I recover at home?**

After you leave the hospital, you will continue healing at home. The amount of time it takes to heal will depend on the type of surgery you had. Your surgeon will give you an idea of how long it will take you to recover.

- The area around your incision may be numb. This should go away over several months.
- You may have some pain or discomfort. Your care team can suggest ways to deal with this.
- You may need more rest after surgery, but you'll be able to do more each day.
- You may have some bleeding or discharge from your vagina or incision. Your surgeon will tell you how much to expect and how long it could last.
- You may be asked to avoid putting anything in your vagina after surgery (tampons, douche, vaginal sex). Follow the instructions provided by your surgeon.

***If you're having anesthesia and/or sedation:***

- You'll need an adult to take you home and stay with you overnight.
- For the first 24 hours after surgery:
  - Plan to relax and take it easy.
  - Don't make any important or legal decisions.
  - Don't drive or use machines at home or at work.
  - Don't drink alcohol.
- Drink clear liquids first. If you don't feel sick to your stomach, slowly add solid food. You should be able to eat your usual food by the day after surgery.

## Part 2: Getting ready for surgery

Please follow the instructions in the handouts below. Your provider or clinic will provide you with a paper copy.

- *Preparing for Your Surgery*, [www.fvfiles.com/193169.pdf](http://www.fvfiles.com/193169.pdf).
- *Showering Before Surgery*, [www.fvfiles.com/521449.pdf](http://www.fvfiles.com/521449.pdf).

### From now until your surgery date

- Pre-register for your hospital stay at [www.fairview.org/Pre-Registration](http://www.fairview.org/Pre-Registration).
- Arrange to have someone help you at home while you are recovering. You will need lots of rest.
- Schedule history and physical appointment with your doctor if this has not already been done.
- Discuss with your surgeon how you will manage pain after surgery.
- Ask your clinic where to get special surgical soap
- Bring or send Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) forms to your clinic. Allow up to 10 business days for the forms to be completed and returned to you.

### 1 to 3 days before surgery

- Your clinic may schedule you for a blood test at the lab. If so, this test must be done **within 72 hours** of your scheduled surgery.
- Obtain the surgical soap as directed by your clinic, if you have not already done so.

### Night before surgery

- Take a shower with the surgical soap you picked up. Follow the directions in *Showering Before Surgery*.

#### Expert Tips:

- Plan to have someone help you at home with household tasks after surgery.
- **If you're having anesthesia, arrange to have an adult drive you home and stay with you for 24 hours.**
- Consider preparing a few meals ahead of time.

#### Remember:

**You need to take 2 showers with the special soap before your surgery.**

Follow the directions in *Showering Before Surgery*.

## Day of surgery

- Continue taking any medicines prescribed to you by your doctor, unless you have been told otherwise.
- Shower with the surgical soap again. Follow the directions in *Showering Before Surgery*.
- Follow the eating and drinking guidelines in *Preparing for Surgery* (or follow your surgeon's guidelines).

## Part 3: Arriving at the hospital or surgery center

### What to expect

- We will ask you to sign a consent form if you have not already done so. It states that you agree to have surgery. It will explain exactly what kind of surgery you are having.
- We may ask you to give a urine sample before surgery. This is to make sure you are not pregnant.
- The anesthesiologist will meet with you to discuss pain control options and give you anesthesia for surgery.
- We will give you acetaminophen (Tylenol). This will help decrease pain from surgery.
- We may place compression sleeves around your lower legs. These will help prevent blood clots.
- We will offer you a special blanket or gown to keep you warm.
- We will take you to the operating room.

## **Part 4: Recovering from surgery**

Right after surgery, you will be in a recovery space where you will wake up from surgery. Your nurse will check your bleeding, surgical cut, and vital signs throughout your stay to watch how well you are recovering.

### **What to expect the first 24 hours**

- You may have ice chips right after surgery.
- You may start eating and drinking as soon as you feel ready. This is usually about 2 hours after surgery. We encourage you to drink water or other liquids to stay hydrated.
- We will remove your urine catheter in the first 2 hours, if you have one. You will be able to urinate on your own.
- We will give you medicine to help with any pain or cramping. You may also ask for medicine for itching, nausea, and shivering.
- We will instruct you on when to remove your bandage and how to care for your surgical cut (if you have one) at home.
- You may begin showering the day after surgery or as directed by your surgeon.
- You should be walking at least 3 times a day.

### **Before you go home**

Your surgeon will give you specific instructions to follow at home. These will include information about:

- When you may use a bathtub, swimming pool or hot tub
- What kind of exercise is safe
- How much weight is safe to lift
- When you may drive or operate machinery
- Problems to watch for and when to see a doctor
- When to come back to see the surgeon

### **! Recovery goals.**

- Sit up within 2 hours after surgery (with help from your nurse).
- Start walking within 6 hours of surgery (with help).
- Able to sit in a chair for meals.
- Pain is under control.
- Begin walking at least 3 times a day.

## **After you're home**

Call your surgeon's office with any questions or if you need support.

- Rest often.
- Drink plenty of water (the amount you normally need to feel hydrated). For many people this is 8 glasses a day. Drinks with caffeine are okay in moderate amounts.
- Try to take at least 3 short walks each day or as much as you are able. Slowly increase your activity each day.
- It is okay to climb stairs, but use the handrail in case you get dizzy.
- Follow your surgeon's advice on when to return to normal activities and to work.
- **If you were given an incentive spirometer:** Try to cough, breathe deeply and use your breathing device (spirometer) every 15 to 30 minutes when awake. This will help prevent breathing problems and fevers.

### ***Incision care***

- The area around your incision may be numb. This should go away over several months.
- Keep the incision dry and covered for the first 24 hours.
- Remove your bandage after 24 hours, even if you have some drainage. Leave your skin open to the air. It is okay to cover it during the day if your clothing rubs against it.
- If you have Steri-Strips (small pieces of tape) across the incision, leave them in place. They will fall off on their own. If they are still in place after a week, you can remove them.
- Don't use ointments, oils, lotions or creams on your incision unless told to use them.
- Avoid nicotine (smoking, vaping), if possible. Nicotine can slow healing.

## ***Bathing and hygiene***

Once your surgeon says you may shower, please follow these tips:

- Shower daily. Gently soap your belly and let the soapy water run over the incision. Don't rub.
- Pat to dry. Dry all areas fully, including any folds in the belly area.
- You don't need to re-cover the wound.

## ***Pain***

It is common to have some pain and cramping when you go home.

- Take pain medicine as needed. Do not wait for the pain to become strong before taking pain medicine.
- Follow the directions that came with your pain medicine.
- Take acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin), or naprosyn (Aleve) with food and a full glass of water. This will reduce stomach upset.
- While taking narcotic (opioid) pain medicine:
  - Don't take pain medicine if you have no pain or your pain is mild and tolerable.
  - Don't drive or use heavy machinery. You may re-start driving and operating machinery after you have stopped taking narcotics, and you feel safe to do so.
  - Don't make important or legal decisions.
  - If you have nausea, vomiting or a rash, stop the medicine and call your doctor.
  - Opioid pain medicines can cause constipation.
- When coughing or sneezing, you may want to hug a pillow for added support if you had surgery on your belly. This may reduce pain.
- **If you had laparoscopic surgery:** You may feel some mild pain in your belly, chest, or shoulder within the first 48 hours. This is due to the gas (CO<sub>2</sub>) used during the surgery. The pain will pass quickly as the gas is absorbed. For relief, take your pain medicine and lie flat.

**! Remember:**  
Rest when you  
need to rest.

**! Remember:**

Only use laxatives if you are told to do so.

## ***Diet***

- You may eat your normal diet unless told otherwise.
- Foods that are high in protein (fish, meat, poultry, soy, dairy, and beans) may help you heal faster.
- Foods that are high in fiber (prunes, vegetables, fruits, and grains) can help prevent constipation (trouble pooping). Constipation is common after surgery, especially if you take opioid pain medicines.

## ***Constipation***

If you become constipated (trouble pooping), try the options listed below as needed.

- Take stool softeners as needed, such as Colace.
- Milk of Magnesia: 30ml (2 tablespoons) twice a day
- Metamucil: 2 tablespoons mixed with 12 ounces of liquid

If you're told to use a laxative, try the following options:

- Senokot-S
- Dulcolax oral or suppositories
- Miralax every day as needed

You can stop if you are pooping regularly or if you start having diarrhea (watery poop). **Call our office if you have not had a bowel movement for 2 days.**

## ***Follow-up visits***

You may need to see your surgeon for a check-up. This varies by the type of surgery you had. If you need to return, your surgeon will let you know when. Please call your surgeon's office to make a follow-up appointment.

## **Helpful resources**

### Billing questions

612-672-6724 or toll free: 1-888-702-4073

[www.fairview.org/billing](http://www.fairview.org/billing)

### Interpreter Services

612-273-3780