



ENHANCED RECOVERY AFTER SURGERY (ERAS)

Patient Education Booklet



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Welcome to the ERAS Program!

For your upcoming surgery you are participating in the Enhanced Recovery After Surgery (ERAS) program, designed to help you recover more quickly and effectively. This booklet provides essential instructions and information to guide you through the process before, during, and after your surgery.

Before Your Surgery

If your surgery is scheduled several weeks in advance, you will have time to optimize your health before undergoing your procedure.

Getting Stronger for Surgery: How Exercise Can Help You Heal

Starting an exercise program before surgery is a great way to help your body get stronger and heal better. A good program includes aerobic activities like walking or biking, strength training, stretching for flexibility, and balance exercises.

Exercise can:

- Build and strengthen your muscles
- Improve your heart and lung health
- Boost your immune system
- Help with flexibility and movement
- Reduce feelings of anxiety and stress
- Lower your risk of weakness (also called frailty)

Even 30 minutes a day can make a big difference in how well your body handles surgery. You can do these exercises at home or in a gym. Your doctor may help design a plan that fits your needs and slowly increases as your body gets stronger and your heart gets healthier.

Supporting Your Nutrition Before Surgery

During the time leading up to your surgery—also called the perioperative period—it's important to build up your nutrient reserves. This helps your body better handle the stress of surgery and recover more quickly afterward. Your ERAS care team may check your nutrition status and recommend a nutrition plan if needed.

To support healing and strength, focus on eating foods high in protein—such as chicken, fish, eggs, beans, lentils, Greek yogurt, and tofu—and include healthy carbohydrates like fruits, vegetables, brown rice, whole grain breads, and oats. Start this focused nutrition plan 7 to 10 days before your surgery to give your body the best chance at a smooth recovery.

Why Quitting Smoking and Alcohol Is Critical Before Surgery

If you smoke or drink alcohol daily, your body faces a much harder recovery from surgery. These habits can seriously affect your breathing, increase your risk of bleeding, and raise the chance of complications during and after your procedure.

People who drink the equivalent of three or more alcoholic drinks a day are more likely to experience problems like excess bleeding and wound infections. Smoking also takes a toll on your body—it weakens your heart and lungs, slows down wound healing, and increases the chance of infection and other serious complications.

To give your body the best chance to heal and protect your lungs, it's crucial to stop smoking and drinking alcohol at least 4 weeks before surgery. Doing so can significantly improve your breathing, reduce your risk of complications, and help ensure a smoother recovery.

Talk to your care team—we're here to help you take this important step.

Understanding Your Pain Management Plan

While surgery does come with some pain, your care team has a plan in place to help you stay as comfortable as possible. This is called a multimodal pain management strategy—which simply means using a combination of different methods to manage pain, rather than relying on just one type of medication.

By using several approaches that work in different ways, we can better control your pain and help reduce the need for strong narcotic (opioid) medications, which can have unwanted side effects.

Your pain management plan may include:

- Non-opioid medications like ibuprofen (a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory), acetaminophen (Tylenol), or muscle relaxants
- Nerve blocks or local anesthesia to numb the surgical area
- Non-medication techniques such as applying ice or heat to reduce discomfort

Your surgeon, anesthesia provider, and ERAS care team will work together to create the best plan for you—and teach you how to manage pain effectively after surgery so you can focus on healing.

Preoperative Phase

As part of your surgery preparation, you'll have a preoperative appointment. This is an important visit—be sure to:

- Bring a list of all your medications, allergies, and medical history to share with your healthcare team.
- Ask about a special drink plan called carbohydrate loading, which you may need to follow the night before and the morning of surgery. This helps your body recover better.
- Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of clear fluids (unless told otherwise by your doctor).
- Review your medications with your doctor. Some medicines—especially blood thinners—may need to be stopped or adjusted before surgery.
- Arrange for a trusted adult to drive you home after your procedure, as you won't be able to drive yourself.

Your care team is here to guide you every step of the way—ask questions if you're unsure about anything.

Eating and Drinking Before Surgery: What's Changed with ERAS

As part of your ERAS (Enhanced Recovery After Surgery) plan, your care team follows the latest medical guidelines to help you recover more smoothly—and that includes what and when you're allowed to eat and drink before surgery.

You may have heard in the past that you couldn't have anything after midnight. That's no longer the case. New guidelines allow you to stay hydrated and nourished closer to your surgery time, which can actually support a better recovery.

Here's what you need to know:

- You may drink clear liquids—such as water, apple juice, black coffee, or plain tea—up to 2 hours before surgery.
- Unless your doctor gives you different instructions, do not eat any solid food after midnight before your surgery.

These guidelines come from the American Society of Anesthesiologists (ASA) and are tailored by age:

- Adults and older adults
 - Clear liquids: up to 2 hours before surgery
 - Light meal: up to 6 hours before surgery

- Infants and children
 - Clear liquids: up to 2 hours before surgery
 - Breast milk: up to 4 hours before surgery
 - Infant formula or nonhuman milk: up to 6 hours before surgery

Because this is new, If you're unsure or have questions, reach out to your surgeon or ERAS team—they're here to help you every step of the way.

Showering Before Surgery: Why It Matters

To help prevent infection after surgery, you may be asked to shower or bathe the night before your procedure. This helps remove bacteria from your skin, lowering your risk of infection.

Your doctor may recommend using regular soap or a special antibacterial cleanser called chlorhexidine gluconate. Be sure to follow the instructions given by your physician or care team.

Important: Do not shave the area near your surgery site—shaving can cause tiny cuts in the skin, which may increase your risk of infection.

On the Day of Surgery: What to Wear and When to Arrive

Wear loose, comfortable clothing to the hospital, and leave any valuables at home for safekeeping. You'll likely be asked to change into a hospital gown once you arrive.

Be sure to arrive at the hospital at the time your surgical team gave you. This allows for enough time for check-in, final preparations, and any last-minute questions before your procedure begins.

During Your Surgery: You're in Good Hands

During your procedure, you'll receive anesthesia based on your surgical plan. If you have any questions or concerns, your anesthesia provider is there to support you.

Throughout the surgery, your care team will be with you the entire time—closely monitoring your safety and comfort. You will also receive appropriate medications and care to manage pain, prevent nausea and vomiting (PONV), and support a smooth recovery.

To help keep you comfortable, you'll be given warming methods before and during surgery, as staying warm can lower the risk of complications.

Rest assured, your ERAS team is focused on keeping you safe, cared for, and as comfortable as possible every step of the way.

Postoperative Care - Recovery Room

You will be taken to a recovery area where you will be monitored as you wake up from anesthesia.

Your Recovery: What to Expect After Surgery

As you begin to wake up and recover from surgery, your care team will be right by your side to make sure you're safe, comfortable, and healing well.

Managing Pain and Staying Comfortable

If you receive a nerve block, it should provide strong pain relief, which means you may need little or no opioid medication. Limiting opioids helps you feel more alert and allows you to get moving sooner, which is key to a smooth recovery.

Even after you go home, it's important to keep taking your scheduled non-opioid medications, such as anti-inflammatories and Tylenol, unless your surgeon tells you otherwise. These medications help reduce swelling and discomfort caused by the surgery.

And remember—your care team relies on you to speak up. Let them know how you're feeling so they can adjust your pain plan if needed and make sure you're as comfortable as possible.

Getting Moving Early

You'll be encouraged to get out of bed and walk as soon as you're able, typically within 2-3 hours after surgery. Early movement is one of the most important things you can do to help prevent complications like blood clots and to support a faster, smoother recovery.

Eating and Drinking

You'll start with clear liquids, and your diet will be advanced as your body allows. As long as it's safe, your care team will move you quickly toward eating and drinking normally again.

IVs and Medications

You'll receive fluids through an IV right after surgery to keep you hydrated, but we'll work to transition you to taking fluids, medications, and pain relief by mouth as soon as possible—this helps you feel more like yourself and supports faster recovery.

Preparing for Home

When it's time to go home, your team will go over your discharge instructions with you—and it's helpful to have a trusted family member or friend there to listen as well.

You may be given prescriptions for pain and other medications. It's important to continue your scheduled non-opioid medications at home as directed and use opioids only if necessary, as opioids can slow down your recovery and may cause side effects like nausea, constipation, or make you sleepy—so using them sparingly is best.

Returning to Normal Activities

You can gradually return to your normal activities, but it's important to avoid anything strenuous until your surgeon gives you the go-ahead.

Listening to your body—movement is important for your recovery, but it should be safe, steady, and at your own pace. Take small steps, rest when needed, and focus on steady progress, not speed.

Attend all follow-up appointments. These are crucial for monitoring your recovery

Tips for a Successful Recovery

Keep eating well and staying hydrated to help your body heal. Gentle movement and light activity can boost circulation and support your overall recovery. And remember—if you have any questions or concerns, don't hesitate to reach out to your healthcare team. We're here to help.

Frequently Asked Questions After Surgery

How can I manage my pain after surgery?

Your care team will give you a personalized pain management plan. Take medications as directed, and try complementary methods like deep breathing, relaxation techniques, or ice packs to stay comfortable. Let your team know how you're feeling—they're here to help.

When can I eat after surgery?

You'll usually start with clear liquids soon after your procedure. As your body tolerates it, you'll rapidly move to a regular diet. Listen to your body—eat when you feel ready, and don't rush.

How soon can I return to normal activities?

That depends on the type of surgery and how your recovery is going. Follow your surgeon's instructions closely and ease back into activities gradually and avoid anything overly strenuous until you're cleared.

Still have questions?

Don't hesitate to contact your surgical team—we're here to support you through every step of recovery.

Disclaimer:

This booklet is for educational purposes only and should not replace professional medical advice. Always consult your healthcare provider for personalized guidance.

Lisa Spruce, DNP, RN, CNS-CP, EBP-C, CNOR, ACNS, ACNP, FAAN