

Enhanced Recovery After Surgery

*Your guide to getting ready for colorectal surgery
and getting better sooner*

**Please bring this book with you to all appointments with your doctors
and be sure to bring it to the hospital to use throughout your stay.**



What is Enhanced Recovery After Surgery?

Enhanced Recovery After Surgery is a care plan that begins before surgery to help you recover sooner and stronger after surgery. Your care team will use this best approach to set specific goals for you to meet before and after your surgery.

Before surgery, we want to help you:

- Be as healthy as possible.
- Improve your nutrition.

After surgery, our goals are to:

- Get you out of bed and walking early and often.
- Encourage you to eat and drink.
- Work with you to keep you comfortable and your pain controlled with minimal side effects.

Following these important steps will help your bowels return to normal so you heal as soon as possible.

It is very important for you to take an active role in your recovery. Be sure to ask us questions along the way so we can make sure we are explaining things in a way that you understand. We are here to help!



**CHRISTIANA CARE
HEALTH SYSTEM**

Thank you for trusting Christiana Care Health System for your colorectal surgical care.

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Leading up to Surgery

In the weeks leading up to surgery

Quit Smoking

You need to quit smoking at least two weeks before surgery. If you cannot quit before then, try to cut down on your smoking. It will lower your chance of:

- Pneumonia.
- Blood clots.
- Heart attack.
- Poor wound healing.
- Wound infection.



If you smoke, it is best to stop smoking as soon as possible before surgery.

Ask your surgeon for resources to help you quit smoking or call **1-800-QUIT-NOW**.

Even if you can't quit completely, please limit your smoking as much as possible.

Remember, you will not be allowed to smoke in the hospital.

Exercise

Exercise is important for healing after surgery. The healthier and more active you are going into surgery, the faster and easier your recovery will be. Try walking for an extra 30 minutes a day with a goal of two miles three times each week. If you have trouble walking, your doctor will recommend other exercises that may help you.

Eat nutritious foods

Eating a healthy diet before surgery can also help with your recovery. Choose foods with plenty of protein, such as lean cuts of meat, chicken and fish, low-fat cheese, protein shakes, nuts and milk. If you have problems eating or swallowing, talk with your surgeon about a nutrition plan.

The day before surgery

Food & Drink

The day before surgery, follow the instructions given to you by your surgeon.

- **Do not eat any solid food the day before surgery.**
- **You will likely be on a clear liquid diet.**
- **Drink plenty of clear liquids the day before surgery.** This will help keep you hydrated.
- **You may also need to do a bowel prep the evening before surgery.** Follow the directions for this given to you by your surgeon.

The Day of Surgery

Before leaving for the hospital

Do not eat any food on the day of surgery. You may drink clear liquids until two (2) hours prior to arrival at the hospital. *Clear liquids include black coffee or tea (NO cream or milk), apple juice and water.*

- ✓ **Two hours before you arrive at the hospital, drink one (1) 20-ounce Gatorade or any sports drink (no red colors).**

At the hospital

Pain control

Oral pain medications — Before your surgery, you will receive pain medicine to take by mouth with a sip of water. This will help with inflammation and pain after surgery.

Regional anesthesia — For some surgeries, you may receive regional anesthesia. This is a technique that uses numbing medicine to help block pain signals to your brain. Your doctor may also call this a peripheral nerve block, or epidural. Your care team will discuss if this option will work for you.

What will my recovery be like the day of surgery?

Once your surgery is complete, there are some important things for you to do to help ensure a fast and comfortable recovery:

- ✓ **Get up and get moving!**

Get out of bed as much as possible. Remember, you will need help. Be sure to ask your nurse or patient care technician to help you get out of bed.

Taking a few steps and sitting in a chair is a good start. The goal is to be out of bed for at least two (2) hours on the day of surgery. A combination of activity that includes standing, walking and sitting in the chair is encouraged. Moving around will help your bowel function recover and lower your chance of blood clots.



✓ **Improve your circulation.**

While in bed, you will need to wear boots on your legs that will inflate every few minutes to help blood circulate in your legs. Doing ankle pumps and rotations 10 times every hour while you are awake will also help prevent blood clots from forming. Ask your nurse if you need help with these exercises.

✓ **Deep breathing exercises.**

Focus on taking deep breaths and coughing to help your lungs clear. You will also use an incentive spirometer 10 times every hour while you are awake. An incentive spirometer is a handheld device that exercises your lungs and measures how much air you can breathe in. Your team will show you how to use it.

✓ **Stay hydrated.**

You will likely be able to drink clear liquids shortly after surgery. This will help with your recovery by keeping you hydrated. Wait for your surgeon to tell you when it is okay for you to start drinking clear liquids.

✓ **Chew gum.**

Chewing gum for 30 minutes three (3) times a day can help your bowels recover sooner.

Pain management

Managing your pain is an important part of your recovery. Your nurse will ask you often about your level of pain. It is important that you are comfortable enough to take deep breaths, walk, eat, drink and sleep.

Treating pain with opioids alone can lead to drowsiness, lower blood pressure, slower breathing, nausea and constipation. You will receive a combination of non-opioid pain medications on a scheduled basis to reduce the amount of narcotics needed to control your pain.

These medications include:

- Acetaminophen (Tylenol).
- Celecoxib (Celebrex).
- Ibuprofen (like Advil or Motrin).
- Gabapentin (Neurontin).



Your Recovery in the Days After Surgery

GET UP AND GET MOVING!

- ✓ If a urine tube (foley catheter) is left in place, it will usually be removed the morning after surgery.
- ✓ Try to walk at least two (2) laps around the nurses' station four times a day. The goal is for you to be out of bed, on and off, for at least six to eight (6-8) hours of the day.
- ✓ You will likely be able to eat solid foods the morning after your surgery. Wait for your surgeon to tell you when it is okay for you to start eating solid foods. You should only eat small amounts at a time. Tell your nurse if you are experiencing nausea.
- ✓ Chew gum at least 30 minutes three times a day.
- ✓ Continue your breathing exercises.



When will I be ready to go home?

Your doctor will decide it is safe to discharge you from the hospital when:

- ✓ You are eating and drinking enough to stay hydrated without intravenous (IV) fluids.
- ✓ You are comfortable and your pain is well controlled.
- ✓ Your nausea is under control.
- ✓ You do not have a fever.
- ✓ You are able to get around safely on your own.
- ✓ Your bowels are working well.

Once You Are Home

Complications do not happen often, but it is important for you to know what to look for if you start to feel bad. Once you are home from the hospital, call your doctor if:

- ✓ You have a fever greater than 100.5 degrees for more than six (6) hours.
- ✓ You are vomiting for more than half the day and cannot keep down liquids.
- ✓ You have severe stomach pain for more than one-to-two (1-2) hours.
- ✓ You have severe diarrhea.
- ✓ You have pus or fluid coming from your incision.
- ✓ You have unequal swelling in your calves.

If you have any of these symptoms, call your doctor's office.

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