



Improving your health before surgery

Island Health Surgery Resources



It is important for you to be in the best possible condition for your surgery. This will help you recover faster and decrease the chances of any problems.

The instructions in this booklet are based partly on the Enhanced Recovery After Surgery (ERAS) plan. The goal of this plan is to get you back to regular activities as soon as possible. To do this, you need to play an active part in getting ready for and recovering from your surgery.

Please follow these directions to improve your health before surgery.

Make an appointment with your family doctor




- Discuss any medical issues that need to be addressed or better managed before surgery.
- Ask your doctor to request blood work and any other tests that he or she thinks you need.
- Some hospitals require that you have a pre-op physical within 3 weeks to 3 months before your surgery. Ask your surgeon if this applies to you.



Smoking

Research tells us that people who stop smoking at least 1 month before surgery have fewer complications after surgery. If you smoke, it's best to cut down or quit 6 to 8 weeks before your surgery date. Quitting smoking will lower the risk of serious problems, such as:

- Slower wound healing.
- Infection in your wound.
- Lung and chest infection.
- Complications while under sedation.

A close-up of a medical monitor screen. It shows a heart rate of 109, a MAP (Mean Arterial Pressure) of 71, and a heart icon. The background is a light blue gradient.

By quitting smoking the length of time you need to recover in the hospital after surgery may also be shorter. If you need help quitting, talk to your family doctor or contact QuitNowBC (<https://www.quitnow.ca>). Both can support you to quit smoking by giving you information and access to smoking cessation aids.

If you have not been able to quit before surgery, tell the nurse on admission so that nicotine replacement can be arranged for you.

A non-smoking policy is in effect for all Island Health properties. This means that smoking is not allowed anywhere on hospital property, inside or out.



Drugs and alcohol

Street drugs (e.g., cocaine, marijuana, LSD, Ecstasy) and alcohol will react with your anesthetic and can cause serious problems. It is best to avoid street drugs and alcohol for at least 3 weeks before your surgery. If you are not able to stop, please tell your surgeon or family doctor. Not telling your doctor may result in your surgery being postponed or in post-operative complications.



Delirium

Post-operative confusion, or delirium, can be frightening for the person experiencing it and for those around them.

It is fairly common in hospitalized patients, and is more common in people who are over 75 years of age, who smoke, drink alcohol, take sleeping or anti-anxiety pills, use illicit drugs regularly, or who have early signs of memory loss (dementia). Tell your doctor if you have any of these risk factors before your surgery.

Talk to your family about delirium before your surgery. They may be asked to help keep you oriented while you recover. Generally, the confusion passes within 72 hours, but it can take longer.



Exercise

Exercise helps you be in the best shape possible before your surgery and can help speed your recovery. Exercise also helps to improve your overall health, and boosts your immune system. You do not need to join a gym! Just going for a walk for 30 minutes each day is good exercise. Talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise plan.



Nutrition

Your body will need extra energy, nutrients and calories to heal. It is important that you be in the best nutritional shape that you can be. If you are overweight or underweight, it may be helpful to speak to your doctor or a Dietitian. A Dietitian can help you choose healthy foods that will help prepare you for surgery.

- If recommended by your doctor or Dietitian, take a multivitamin once a day.
- If recommended by your doctor or Dietitian, drink a meal replacement, such as *Boost™*, with your meals, once or twice a day, for two weeks before surgery.



HealthLinkBC to speak to a Dietitian:

- phone: **8.1.1** weekdays from 9am-5pm
- email: www.healthlinkbc.ca weekdays from 9am-5pm

Translation services are available.





A positive attitude

Having a positive attitude about your progress before and after surgery is important to your recovery.

Some people find it helpful to practice relaxation techniques or mediation before surgery.

You can find many good resources online or at the public library.



Resources

Talk to your Doctor

- email: www.bluewavebc.ca/take-action/talk-to-your-doctor/

This website has tips on how to manage your appointments with your doctor, what you can do to prepare for your appointment, what to do during appointments, and more.

HealthLinkBC

- phone: 8.1.1
- email: www.healthlinkbc.ca

A free-of-charge health information and advice phone line available in British Columbia. Operated by HealthLinkBC (www.healthlinkbc.ca), this service can help you find health information and services, or connect you directly with a Registered Nurse, Registered Dietitian or a Pharmacist.

Island Health Surgery Resources

- email: www.viha.ca/
 - Meeting your surgeon
 - Improving your health before surgery
 - Getting ready for and recovering from surgery



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