



combination with one another, or in combination with the expectorant herbs listed above.

Preparing for and Recovering from Surgery

Although few people enjoy the prospect of surgery, sometimes surgery is the best available means of improving the quality of life or extending life. Thousands of Americans face surgery each year, often with fear and doubt. Not knowing what is involved can mean putting yourself through far more discomfort than is necessary. Whether you are undergoing surgery for the first time or the tenth, understanding why you need it and knowing about the risks involved, available alternative treatments, and the aftereffects will help you make the right decision. Being educated about your illness will enable you to deal more effectively with the outcome.

After you have been informed of all your options and have decided that surgery is the only viable alternative, use the nutritional guidelines provided in the table below to prepare for the surgery. (For more information on making the decision to have surgery, see the inset on that subject in this section.) By taking these nutrients both before and after surgery, you will support the healing process and lessen postsurgical discomfort and pain. Make sure that your diet is well balanced and healthy. Remember that your general health *after* surgery partly depends on your general health *before* surgery. Do not take any supplements that thin the blood before surgery. Eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA), feverfew, garlic, ginger, ginkgo biloba, kava kava, and vitamin E are among the supplements that should not be used prior to surgery.

Unless otherwise stated, the dosages recommended here are for adults. For a child between the ages of twelve and seventeen, reduce the dose to three-quarters of the recommended amount. For a child between the ages of six and twelve, use one-half the recommended dose, and for a child under six, use one-quarter of the recommended amount.

NOTE:

Please consult nutritionist Karl Mincin before using any of the supplemental nutrients and herbs listed herein. Food, dietary and other recommendations are generally safe to use without consultation. This information is for general education purposes only, not intended to diagnose nor treat medical conditions.

Source: Balch, P. *Prescription for Nutritional Healing*, 4th ed. 2006

Karl Mincin, Clinical Nutritionist
 (360) 336-2616 770-8486
www.Nutrition-Testing.com

NUTRIENTS

SUPPLEMENT	SUGGESTED DOSAGE	COMMENTS
Acidophilus (Kyo-Dophilus from Wakunaga is a good source)	As directed on label 3 times daily.	To stabilize the intestinal bacterial flora if antibiotics are used. Use a high-potency powdered form.
Coenzyme Q ₁₀	60 mg daily.	A free radical destroyer that improves tissue oxygenation.
Essential fatty acids (salmon oil and Ultimate Oil from Nature's Secret are good sources)	As directed on label.	Important for proper cell growth and healing of all tissues. <i>Caution:</i> Do not take for one week prior to surgery. Take this supplement after the surgery.

Free-form amino acid complex	As directed on label.	Aids in collagen synthesis and wound healing. Is a readily available form of protein, easily absorbed by the body.
Garlic (Kyolic from Wakunaga)	2 capsules 3 times daily.	A natural antibiotic that enhances immune function.
L-Cystine	500 mg twice daily.	Speeds healing of wounds.
L-Glutamine	500 mg 3 times daily and at bedtime.	Speeds healing of wounds.
L-Lysine	500 mg daily.	Speeds healing of wounds and aids collagen formation. <i>Caution:</i> Do not take lysine for longer than 6 months at a time.
Methylsulfonylmethane (MSM)	As directed on label.	Good for pain and healing of tissues.
Multivitamin complex with vitamin A and mixed carotenoids including natural beta-carotene	As directed on label.	Provides necessary vitamins and minerals. Vitamin A is needed for protein utilization in tissue repair and is a free radical scavenger.
Pycnogenol or grape seed extract	As directed on label.	Surgery depletes the body of antioxidants. These are powerful antioxidants.
Vitamin C with bioflavonoids	6,000–10,000 mg daily, in divided doses.	Aids in tissue repair and healing of wounds. Vital in immune function. Use a buffered form.
Vitamin E	Beginning the day after surgery, take 600 IU daily. Do not take any vitamin E during the 2 weeks before surgery, as it thins the blood.	Improves circulation and repairs tissues. Use d-alpha-tocopherol form.
Vitamin E oil	After the stitches are removed and healing has begun, apply topically to the area of the incision 3 times daily.	Promotes healing and reduces scar formation. Purchase in oil form or cut open a capsule to release the oil.
Vitamin K	As directed on label.	This important vitamin is needed for blood clotting.
Zinc plus calcium and magnesium and silica and vitamin D	50 mg daily. 1,500 mg daily. As directed on label. As directed on label. 400 IU daily.	Important for tissue repair. Look for a supplement that contains all of these nutrients.

HERBS

Herbal teas are highly recommended before and after surgery. Try the following teas:

- Alfalfa, dandelion, and nettle are high in vitamins, minerals, and can also increase the appetite. Alfalfa is also a good source of iron.
- Bromelain and turmeric (curcumin) have potent anti-inflammatory properties.
- Burdock root and red clover aid in cleansing the blood and the liver.

- Echinacea enhances immune system function.
- Goldenseal is a natural antibiotic and helps to prevent infection.

Caution: Do not take this herb internally on a daily basis for more than one week at a time, as it may disturb normal intestinal flora. Do not use it during pregnancy, and use it with caution if you are allergic to ragweed.

- Green tea contains powerful antioxidants that aid in the healing process.
- Kelp, reishi, and St. John's wort may help protect against the adverse effects of x-ray radiation.
- Milk thistle protects the liver from the toxic buildup of drugs and chemicals resulting from surgical procedures.
- Pau d'arco is a natural antibacterial herb. It enhances healing, cleanses the blood, and aids in the prevention of candidiasis.
- Rose hips are a good source of vitamin C and enhance healing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Consult with your physician about minimally invasive surgery, also called laparoscopic, "keyhole," and "band-aid" surgery. This type of procedure—involving one or more small incisions rather than a large one—does less damage to the skin, muscles, and nerves than does conventional "open" surgery. It also involves a shorter hospital stay and less recovery time. Be aware that such procedures can be used for certain surgeries only.

If you are overweight and have sufficient time to diet before surgery, try to gradually lose the extra weight. Studies show that excess weight can increase both the difficulty of performing surgery and the length of the recovery time. It has also been linked to an increased likelihood of post-operative infection.

If you smoke, stop. Smoking delays healing and interferes with the actions of certain drugs.

Make sure your doctor and those who will care for you are aware of any allergies you have to drugs, chemicals, or foods.

Ask your surgeon if there is anything that you can do to prepare for the surgery. In addition to the surgeon's recommendations, avoid taking vitamin E supplements, aspirin, and all compounds containing aspirin for two weeks prior to surgery. These substances thin the blood.

Make sure your doctor and those who will care for you are aware of any supplements and medications—including natural medicines—you take regularly.

Because blood transfusions are sometimes required during surgery, speak to your doctor about the possibility of storing your own blood for use during the operation. By using your own blood, you will avoid the risk of contracting hepatitis or the AIDS virus. Remember that even dis-

ease-free blood can cause reactions such as rashes if not perfectly matched. Your doctor will tell you if you need to take iron supplements a week before the first blood collection. Arrange the appointments so that the last time you give blood is at least four days before the surgery. (Whole blood can be stored for thirty-five days.)

Many operations require that the patient be shaved. If this is necessary, tell the surgeon that you prefer to be shaved the day of surgery. Studies show that the infection rate is lower for patients who are shaved the day of surgery when compared with those who are shaved the night before.

Add fiber to your diet. It ensures better intestinal tract function.

Check with your surgeon before using any treatments at home prior to surgery. If the surgeon concurs, take two cleansing enemas using the juice of a fresh lemon before entering the hospital. It is important to have a clean colon prior to surgery. Taking a half glass of aloe vera juice in the morning and before bedtime will help to keep your colon clean. Take a bottle of this remedy with you to the hospital. It tastes like spring water and needs no refrigeration.

Many hospitals employ massage with therapeutic essential oils to promote relaxation and relieve the inevitable stress of the presurgical period. If your hospital does not practice this therapy, make arrangements for a qualified massage therapist who is knowledgeable about aromatherapy to give you a massage prior to surgery.

Keep a positive attitude about your surgery, and look forward to getting out of bed and back to normal as soon as possible. The sooner you get out of bed, the better your chances of avoiding postoperative infection.

The practice of ordering routine laboratory tests before admission for surgery is commonplace in most hospitals. Many doctors believe that urinalysis, chest x-rays, or complete blood counts, for example, can identify potential problems that might complicate the surgery if not detected and treated early. Tests that are commonly performed before surgery, and the symptoms that prompt doctors to order them, include the following:

- Blood glucose: Alcoholism, altered mental status, cystic fibrosis, diabetes, excessive sweating with tremor or anxiety, muscle weakness, or pancreatitis.
- Blood potassium: Congestive heart failure, diabetes, diarrhea, high blood pressure, kidney failure, muscle weakness, tissue damage, use of drugs known to affect potassium levels, or vomiting.
- Blood sodium: Central nervous system disease, cirrhosis, congestive heart failure, diarrhea, excessive sweating, pulmonary disease, thirst or fluid intake, or vomiting.
- Chest x-ray: Abnormal sounds when breathing, chest pain, cough, fever with no known source, or shortness of breath.

- Electrocardiogram (EKG): Chest pain, distant heart sound, heart murmur, irregular heartbeat, or palpitations.
- Platelet count: Alcoholism, blood loss, easy bruising, or use of drugs known to affect platelet count.
- Urinalysis: Diabetes, discharge, kidney disease, side pain, urinary frequency or hesitancy, or use of drugs known to cause kidney disease.
- White blood count: Fever, suspicion of infection, or use of drugs known to affect white blood cell count.

Discuss with your doctor the necessity of having certain tests performed prior to surgery.

Before deciding to have surgery, ask your physician the following types of questions:

- Why do I need the operation?
- Are there alternatives to surgery?
- What are the benefits of having the operation?
- What are the risks of having the operation?
- What if I do not have this operation?
- What is your experience in performing this surgery?
- What kind of anesthesia will I need?
- How will the surgery improve my quality of life and/or my chances for survival?
- Are there other forms of treatment that might be used instead of surgery?
- What percentage of the operations performed of this type are successful?
- What physical changes will result from this operation, and what improvements can you expect?
- How long is the recovery period?
- What is the cost of the operation?

Ask about the potential risks and side effects of having anesthesia. Be sure to mention any medical problems you have, including allergies, and any medications you have been taking, since they may affect your response to the anesthesia.

After surgery, don't overwork your body by eating highly processed foods. Try to consume at least 8 cups of liquids each day, including distilled water, herbal teas, juices, and protein drinks. The appetite is often poor after surgery, and large meals can be overwhelming. Try eating five to seven small, light, nutritious meals a day.

After surgery, exercise caution when engaging in strenuous activity such as lifting. Most doctors advise patients to avoid lifting anything in excess of 10 pounds for two weeks after surgery. Ask your doctor when you can begin light exercise, which has been shown to aid circulation and speed physical recovery. Also ask if there are any specific exercises that can aid your recovery.

After surgery, the homeopathic remedy *Arnica montana* is good for reducing swelling and promoting healing.

CONSIDERATIONS

❑ After major surgery, people generally experience a rapid breakdown of skeletal muscle, which increases any feelings of weakness. In studies in which the amino acid glutamine was added to postsurgical intravenous solutions, muscle breakdown rates were greatly diminished.

❑ Nicholas Cavarocchi, M.D., of Temple University recommends that patients be given 2,000 international units of vitamin E twelve hours prior to heart surgery. This amount of vitamin E lowers free radical levels in the blood. This is recommended only under a physician's supervision.

❑ Some foods interfere with the actions of certain medications. Milk, dairy products, and iron supplements may interfere with some forms of antibiotics. Acidic fruits, such as oranges, pineapples, and grapefruits, can inhibit the action of penicillin and aspirin. See *Substances That Rob the Body of Nutrients* on page 336 for a list of the nutrients that are lost with the use of different drugs.

❑ Postsurgical depression is not uncommon. A healthy dietary program can help fight depression.

❑ An article in the May 1999 issue of *American Health* reported that research from the University of Chicago Medical Center found that patients who ate potatoes, tomatoes, and eggplants prior to surgery reacted unpredictably to anesthesia. These foods contain natural chemicals that affect metabolism and may alter the effect of anesthesia.

❑ Remember: It takes the body a few weeks to recover from the trauma of surgery. During this period, hormonal imbalances are corrected, and the rate of metabolism is adjusted. Most incisions close within two days and heal within a week to the point that the skin will hold together under normal stress and body movement. However, you should obtain your doctor's approval before engaging in any exercise or lifting anything over 10 pounds in weight.

Therapeutic Liquids

The benefits of vegetables and grains are discussed throughout this book. This section offers two recipes that provide these benefits in broths that have healing properties.

The first of the broths derives its healthful properties—including its high potassium content—from potatoes and other vegetables. When purchasing potatoes, choose ones that do not have a green tint. The chemical solanine, which gives the potato its green cast, can interfere with nerve impulses and cause diarrhea, vomiting, and abdominal pain. Use Potato Peeling Broth as a nutritious drink when fasting. This broth is also good for heart disorders.

The second broth—Barley Water—has healing and fortifying properties and is useful during convalescence from many different illnesses. You can also add powdered slip-

pery elm to the water to make a drink that is not only nourishing, but also soothing to the throat and digestive tract.

Many other therapeutic liquids can also be made from vegetables and grains, as well as from fruits. To learn about nutritious juices, see *JUICING* in Part Three.

Potato Peeling Broth

3 potatoes

1 carrot, sliced

1 celery stalk, sliced

2 quarts steam-distilled water

1 onion, sliced and/or 3 cloves garlic, peeled

1. Scrub the potatoes well, and cut out any eyes.
2. Cut the potatoes in half. Cut the peel from the potatoes, making sure to keep about 1/2 inch of potato with the peel. Set aside the potato centers for another use.
3. Place the potato peelings, carrot, and celery in a large pot. Cover with the water. Add the onion and/or garlic to taste, and boil for about 30 minutes.
4. Cool the broth. Strain out and discard the vegetables, and serve the broth as desired.

Barley Water

1 cup barley

3 quarts steam-distilled water

1. Place the barley and the water in a large pot, and boil for about 3 hours.
2. Cool the broth. Strain out and discard the barley, and serve the broth as desired.

TENS Unit Therapy

See under PAIN CONTROL.

Yoga

Yoga is not new; it was developed in India over 5,000 years ago, and was used to unite the body, mind, and spirit. Often, people think of yoga as physical exercise. However, the progress of learning to still the mind and unify consciousness is also important in yoga exercises. It can be difficult to turn off the voices in your head, especially when your body is motionless.

Hatha is a Sanskrit word meaning "willful" and *yoga* is translated as "union" or "communion." This is understood as meditation in action. *Hatha yoga* is a term familiar to many who practice yoga, but it is not actually a particular style of yoga.