

Preparing for Surgery Checklist



If you have your surgery date booked, use this checklist to help ensure you're ready in the months and weeks leading up to your surgery. If you're waiting for your surgery confirmation, there's still plenty you can do to be prepared when the day arrives.

In the months before surgery

- Learn as much as you can about the surgery and what will happen during recovery and rehabilitation.
- Practice with any mobility devices you'll be using after surgery.
- Eat a nutritious, well-balanced diet – stay hydrated, eat more fibre and foods high in Vitamin C, calcium, and iron.
- Be as fit as possible to help you recover quickly.
- Perform exercises to help strengthen your joints and reduce muscle soreness and fatigue that might have resulted from the use mobility devices.
- For hip or knee surgery, strengthen your leg muscles by walking regularly.
- Complete any recommended pre-operative (pre-op) exercises twice a day.
- Quit smoking - smoking increases your risk of getting a serious infection after surgery.
- Reduce alcohol use - you should not exceed 14 drinks per week (men) or seven drinks per week (women).
- Ensure you are up-to-date on vaccinations (such as the flu vaccine).
- Bring a friend or family member to your pre-op meeting with the surgeon.

In the weeks before surgery

- Arrange for meals during your recovery period (e.g. freeze meals that can easily be reheated during the first week or two after surgery).
- Avoid shaving for 5 days before and 2 weeks after surgery post-op to avoid small cuts in the skin that can harbor bacteria and lead to infection.
- Attend any pre-operative teaching sessions arranged by your surgeon/hospital and follow the instructions. For example, you may need to contact a clinic to schedule your post-operative physiotherapy sessions once you know your surgery date.
- Attend any required pre-op appointments and tests (blood tests, cardiogram, x-ray).
- The surgical team may advise you to stop certain medications (e.g. nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, blood thinners, medications used to treat rheumatologic conditions, etc.) prior to surgery. If you have questions about any of your medications, ask your surgeon.
- If you are taking opioid pain medications, your doctor may advise that you reduce the dose as much as possible or slowly discontinue use before surgery. Patients who are taking these medications before surgery tend to have more trouble managing their pain after surgery.
- You will be advised to stop taking most supplements, such as multi-vitamins (check with your surgeon).
- Remind family and friends of the date of the surgery so they can support if needed.
- Set up your home so that you can sleep on the same floor you spend most of your day – this will help avoid the use of stairs after your surgery.
- Move furniture, rugs and mats to avoid tripping.
- If needed, install a raised toilet seat and/or get a bedside commode (a chair with built-in bed pan).
- Add a small sitting stool for the shower and a non-skid mat for your bathtub or shower.
- Move items you'll use often to an easy-to-access location.
- Plan how you'll get the mail, handle laundry, prepare meals, etc. after your operation.
- Arrange for family and friends to look after any pets and/or plants during surgery and recovery.
- Use armchairs during recovery to support you when you sit down and stand up.
- Arrange your bed so that the height of the mattress isn't too low or too high.
- Have a dental evaluation and address any dental issues before surgery.
- Report any illness leading up to surgery to your surgeon. You should also tell your surgeon if you have any open sores on your body. If you have an infection elsewhere in your body, your surgery may need to be delayed to reduce the risk of developing a serious infection in the new joint.

Packing your hospital bag: What to include

- A list of all your current medications.
- Your health card.
- The name, phone number and address of your pharmacy.
- An up-to-date contact list of family, friends, and your family doctor for caregivers and healthcare team.
- The names of other healthcare professionals involved in your arthritis care, along with their addresses, phone and fax numbers.
- An up-to-date list of medication allergies, dietary restrictions and food allergies.
- Loose, comfortable clothes to wear in hospital and for the trip home.
- Supportive shoes that you can easily slip into.
- If you wear glasses, contact lenses, a hearing aid or dentures, be sure to bring a case to put them in, labelled with your name and phone number.
- Personal hygiene items such as a toothbrush, shampoo, soap, deodorant, wet wipes, and a razor (no shaving of the incision area for at least 2 weeks after the operation).

24-hours before surgery

- Take a shower/bath the night before, wash thoroughly with anti-bacterial soap.
- Avoid lotions, powders, shaving.
- Sleep in clean pajamas on freshly laundered sheets the night before surgery.
- Remove any make-up, lipstick, and/or nail polish before going to hospital.
- On the morning of surgery, you can have clear fluids (such as apple juice, sports drinks, etc.) up to 3 hours before surgery to help you stay hydrated.
- Be sure your hospital bag is packed and ready to go.

Sources

<https://orthoinfo.aaos.org/en/treatment/preparing-for-joint-replacement-surgery/>

<https://my.clevelandclinic.org/ccf/media/Files/Ortho/patient-education/total-joint-replacement-patient-guide.pdf?la=en>

<https://myhealth.alberta.ca/Alberta/Pages/while-waiting-for-knee-replacement-surgery.aspx>

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