



HEAL BETTER FEEL BETTER

After Surgery Essentials



HEALTHY
NUTRITION

STRESS
MANAGEMENT

ESSENTIALS
FOR HEALTHY
HEALING

MOVEMENT

SLEEP

Surgery puts everything into perspective.

It can be an opportunity to make small but meaningful changes from learning more about your health to stopping smoking, losing weight, or reaching out to a loved one.

Before surgery, what is one change you made to your diet, activity, health management, or outlook on life? *Write it down:*

What would it look like if you continued on that path and even explored more options? This is an opportunity to turn short-term success into long-term transformation.

This guide will get you started. Try out some of these tips over the next 2-4 weeks to begin building healthy habits and routines. With **Heal Better, Feel Better** you get to decide what this next chapter looks like!

Find more tips and tools at
www.heal-better.org

Use your phone camera to scan the QR code to the right.



NUTRITION

Healing your surgical wound starts with three nutritional building blocks:



CALORIES

Gives you the energy to heal and function

PROTEIN

Helps you repair old tissue and create new tissue

VITAMINS & MINERALS

Combats infection and helps your cells regenerate

EAT ENOUGH PROTEIN

Protein is critical to healing after surgery. Make sure to add lots of protein-rich foods to your diet and try to eat at least 50g of protein per day.

HYDRATE

Drinking enough water helps your body bounce back after surgery and prevents complications like blood clots.

MANAGE YOUR BLOOD SUGAR

Keeping your blood sugar “in range” will help you feel better, have more energy, and can even help prevent infection. Try to avoid or reduce highly processed and sugary foods or drinks in your diet.

FOCUS ON FOODS THAT CONTAIN:

Vitamin C: Boosts your immune system and reduces the chance of infection.

Vitamin A: Helps speed up healing by increasing collagen development.

Zinc and Iron: Supports the growth of strong, healthy tissue.

TRY THESE FOODS:

Get your protein

- ☐ Eggs, beans, lentils, fish, chicken, beef
- ☐ Add a handful of nuts or seeds to your meal
- ☐ Snack on cottage cheese, nut butters, and greek yogurt

Boost your vitamin C

- ☐ Fruits like oranges, strawberries
- ☐ Spinach, tomatoes, broccoli, and bell pepper

Boost your vitamin A

- ☐ Mango, peaches, and pumpkin
- ☐ Carrots
- ☐ Cheese, eggs (also filled with zinc!)

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Your mental well-being has a big impact on healing. Managing stress after surgery has been shown to decrease possible complications, help you heal faster, reduce pain, and have better overall outcomes.

SPEND TIME OUTSIDE

Sitting on your porch, going to a park, or even looking at pictures of nature (like in a movie or video game) has been shown to help speed up your recovery and reduce the need for pain medications.

CONNECT WITH FRIENDS & FAMILY

Feeling support and connection to others can help you heal more effectively. Reach out to a friend or family member and be open, and if you are able, let them know the support you may need. Spend time with pets that provide comfort and companionship.

CREATIVE EXPRESSION

Believe it or not, journaling has been shown to increase the speed of wound healing. Take a few minutes each day to write about your thoughts and feelings after surgery.

LISTEN TO MUSIC

It seems simple, but listening to music can reduce stress, anxiety, and depression. Multiple studies have shown that it can also help reduce your pain after surgery, so get that favorites playlist queued up!

MOVEMENT

Movement is key to recovering from surgery. Even small amounts can help your blood circulate, improve your lung and heart function, reduce your pain, and lead to stronger tissue growth. *Consult your doctor before starting a new fitness routine, and yourself and your care team: **What kind of movement can I make a part of my daily routine before and after surgery?***

1-4 Weeks After Surgery

Start moving as soon as you are able after surgery. Focus on increasing your range of motion and the steps you take each day. Start with small, gentle movements and slowly increase as you feel comfortable. Incorporate light exercise such as walking or household chores.

5-8 Weeks After Surgery

Gradually increase the amount of time you spend active. Maybe challenge yourself to walk a little more each day. Continue to stretch or do other range of motion exercises appropriate for your surgery.

SLEEP

Sleep supports your post-surgery recovery, but surgery can also disrupt your usual sleeping habits, making it harder to get quality rest. Commit to healthy sleep practices and check with your doctor if you experience sleep apnea or other conditions affecting your sleep.

SLEEP HYGIENE CHECKLIST

- ☐ Sleep at least 8 hours per day (this can include naps!).
- ☐ Follow a consistent sleep schedule.
- ☐ Keep screens out of your bedroom, including TVs and phones.
- ☐ Don't eat a big meal or exercise before bed.
- ☐ Keep your bedroom cool, dark, and quiet.
- ☐ Avoid alcohol, caffeine, or nicotine before bedtime.
- ☐ Find ways to get lots of natural light during the day.



QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR CARE TEAM IF YOU...

- ☐ **Smoke or vape**
What are options to help me quit?
- ☐ **Drink or use drugs**
What are the risks of alcohol, cannabis, or other drugs on my healing? How can I get help to quit?
- ☐ **Take supplements**
Will these interact with my medications or healing?
- ☐ **Have trouble affording medications, groceries, transportation, rent, or housing**
I'm struggling. Who can I talk to?

ALCOHOL

Drinking alcohol after surgery can delay healing, making it harder for the body to grow new tissue. It also puts you at greater risk for blood clots. It's best to avoid alcohol for 5-6 weeks after surgery.



At least 1 in every 10 adults struggles with their alcohol use, and 40% say they're trying to drink less this year.

CHECK YOURSELF

It can be hard to know if you have a problem. Check your drinking profile using a free, interactive self-test like AUDIT (see right).

SHARING IS CARING

It's important to inform your surgeon about your alcohol use to ensure the safest and most effective care. Your care team is invested in your healthy outcomes after surgery. They can guide you to the best treatments and resources.

ENJOY RESPONSIBLY

More and more Americans are consuming non-alcoholic (NA) beverages. From zero proof spirits to NA beer and wine, the options have skyrocketed. Check out the NA section of your favorite beverage store, bar, or restaurant. You'll be pleasantly surprised.

CONSTIPATION



Constipation is one of the most common surgical complications, but it can sometimes be so uncomfortable that patients have a hard time returning to regular activities. This is caused by many factors, including stress, pain medication, and decreased activity. **The good news is, it's very treatable!**

MAKE A PLAN

Don't wait for symptoms to start, have a plan for preventing constipation before you leave the hospital.

- ☐ Drink lots of water
- ☐ Start walking around as soon as your care team says it's okay
- ☐ Talk to your care team about starting a laxative while you are in the hospital
- ☐ Add fiber to your diet (whole grains, vegetables, beans, fresh fruit)

SUBSTANCE USE RESOURCES

- ☐ **Check your drinking with AUDIT.**
A free, interactive self-test recommended by physicians: auditscreen.org/check-your-drinking/
- ☐ **Find a substance use support program in your area.**
Use the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services MISUD Locator www.michigan.gov/opioids/find-help/misud-locator
- ☐ **Reach out for support via SAMHSA's National Helpline.**
[1-800-662-HELP \(4357\)](https://www.samhsa.gov/1-800-662-HELP) is a free 24/7 confidential referral and information line for individuals and families experiencing mental health and/or substance use issues.

SMOKING CESSATION RESOURCES

- ☐ **Start with the Michigan Quitlink**
[1-800-QUIT-NOW](https://1-800-QUIT-NOW.org) or michigan.quitlogix.org. Connect with free live coaching by phone, email, or text message and access free starter nicotine replacement therapies, like gums and patches. Hear how others in your area are successfully quitting, with peer support.

HEALTHY FOOD RESOURCES

- ☐ **Michigan 211**
A statewide directory of community resources, including home-delivered meals, fruit and vegetable boxes, and pantries. Search by zip code: mi211.org

Find more tips and tools at
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MY HEAL BETTER PLAN

MY SURGEON

Dr.

Surgery Phone Number & Address

() _____ - _____

MY SUPPORTERS

Who can I contact if I need immediate help in an emergency?

Who can drive me to appointments?

On My Surgery Day: Who will stay with me at the hospital during my surgery?

After Surgery: Who will help me with daily tasks, like getting food and medications from the store, cleaning, or personal needs?

MY QUESTIONS



My favorite **protein-rich foods**:

My favorite **vitamin-rich foods**:

How will I stay hydrated?



My favorite **movement activities**:

What time(s) of day will I move?

How will I **recover** after movement?

Who in my life gets me moving?



My favorite ways to **relax, find enjoyment, connect to others, and myself**:

Who can I reach out to for a laugh, support, or understanding?



What do I need to **sleep well after surgery**?

When is my goal bedtime?



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