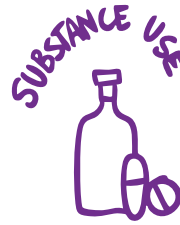


ALCOHOL AND SURGERY



Stop or reduce alcohol before surgery to improve your recovery. Alcohol affects how your body responds to surgery, anesthesia, and medications.

How alcohol affects your body



Increases your risk of at least 7 types of cancer



Causes liver disease



Slows healing



Weakens your immune system

What you can do now – start this week



Reduce or stop alcohol as soon as possible:

The earlier you reduce your drinking before surgery, the better for your recovery.

- ☼ **0 drinks per week is best** for your health and healing.
- ☼ **If you do drink**, 1–2 drinks per week is associated with low risk of alcohol-related harms per Canada's Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines.
- ☼ **Stop completely at least 24 hours before surgery.** No alcohol in the day before your procedure.



If you drink alcohol most days or have had withdrawal before:

- ☼ Stopping alcohol suddenly can make you unwell and can be dangerous.
- ☼ **Know the signs of withdrawal:** feeling shaky, nausea, sweating, confusion, hallucinations, or seizures.
- ☼ **What to do:** Reduce alcohol gradually (taper) rather than stopping suddenly. Contact your primary care provider for resources and guidance.

Why does alcohol use matter for surgery?

- ☼ Increases your risk of **complications after surgery** (like heart problems and pneumonia)
- ☼ Slows your body's ability to **heal incisions**, increasing risk of infections
- ☼ Can change how well your body responds to **anesthesia and pain medications**

Get support

You do not have to do this alone.

- ☼ Call and make an appointment with your family doctor or nurse practitioner
- ☼ Call 811 to speak to someone who will find you local supports and clinics
- ☼ Call the Alcohol and Drug Information Line (1-800-663-1441)



For more detailed information and resources about alcohol use, visit

sscbc.ca/patient-prehab-resources/alcohol-use



Funding for this project was provided by the Specialist Services Committee (SSC), one of four Joint Collaborative Committees (JCC) representing a partnership between Doctors of BC and the Government of BC

ANEMIA AND SURGERY



Anemia means you have low red blood cells, which carry oxygen and give your body energy. Treating anemia before surgery can make your surgery safer and help you recover faster.

How anemia affects your body



Feeling tired or low energy



Difficulty concentrating



Weakness



Feeling short of breath

What you can do now – start this week



Make sure you understand the reason for your anemia

[e.g., from low iron, kidney disease].



Build your iron levels

- Eat iron-rich foods [e.g., meat, beans, lentils]
- Ask your care team if iron supplements are right for you
- Ask your care team if IV iron is right for you



If your anemia is from low iron

- It is important to understand why your iron is low [e.g., because of diet, poor absorption, menstruation, or other types of bleeding.]
- Sometimes, further testing is needed to rule out other causes.



Important

If you have anemia and don't know why, call and make an appointment with your family doctor or nurse practitioner to identify the cause and start treatment before surgery.

Why does anemia matter for surgery?

- Higher chance of needing a blood transfusion
- Higher risk of complications after surgery
- Longer hospital stay
- Slower recovery



For more detailed information and resources about anemia, visit

sscbc.ca/patient-prehab-resources/anemia



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BLOOD SUGAR (GLUCOSE) AND SURGERY



Blood sugar [glucose] is the amount of sugar in your blood. Keeping it in a healthy range - not too high and not too low - is important, especially if you have diabetes or pre-diabetes. Reducing high blood sugar before surgery can help you heal and recover faster.

How high blood sugar affects your body



Damages blood vessels leading to strokes and heart attacks



Harms your eyes, kidneys and nerves



Weakens your immune system

What you can do now – start this week

Aim for a blood sugar level (HbA1c) of 7% or less before surgery.

If your blood sugar is very high (often HbA1c above 8.5%), surgery may need to be delayed until it improves.



Move your body

Aim for ~20 minutes of activity daily (e.g., walking) and strength exercises (e.g., STABL program) 2x/week. If you need a tailored plan, connect with a physiotherapist.



Eat to support stable blood sugar

Choose balanced meals with vegetables, fiber, and protein. Limit sugary foods and drinks. If you need more support, connect with a dietitian.



Follow your treatment plan

Take your medications exactly as prescribed and do not stop unless advised to do so. Monitor your blood sugar levels at home if you have been recommended to do so.



See your diabetes care provider before surgery

Call and make an appointment with your family doctor, nurse practitioner, or diabetes educator to review your control before surgery.

Why does high blood sugar matter for surgery?

- Increases your risk of **complications after surgery** (like heart problems and pneumonia)
- Slows your body's ability to **heal incisions**, increasing risk of infections



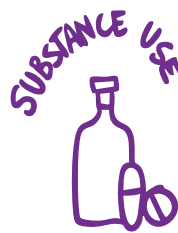
For more detailed information and resources about blood sugar, visit

sscbc.ca/patient-prehab-resources/blood-sugar



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CANNABIS (MARIJUANA) AND SURGERY



Stop using cannabis before surgery to improve your recovery. Cannabis affects how your body responds to surgery, anesthesia, and medications.

How cannabis affects your body



If smoked or vaped, it can cause lung damage (like bronchitis and emphysema)



Increases your risk of heart attack and stroke



Can worsen anxiety and depression, and may affect memory and thinking

What you can do now – start this week



Reduce or stop cannabis:

- ⚙️ Avoid cannabis *before* surgery (start now) and until you are healed.
- ⚙️ If you choose to use cannabis, stop at least **3 days (72 hours)** before surgery. This includes smoking, vaping, edibles, and oils (topical creams are okay).



If you use cannabis most days or in larger amounts:

- ⚙️ Stopping suddenly can cause unpleasant withdrawal symptoms.
- ⚙️ Cannabis withdrawal is not dangerous but can be uncomfortable with irritability, trouble sleeping, anxiety and nausea.
- ⚙️ **What to do:** Reduce cannabis gradually (taper) over about a week rather than stopping suddenly. Then stop at least 3 days (72hrs) before surgery.

Get support

You do not have to do this alone.

- ⚙️ Call and make an appointment with your family doctor or nurse practitioner
- ⚙️ Call 811 to find local supports and services
- ⚙️ Call the Alcohol and Drug Information Line (1-800-663-1441)

Why does cannabis use matter for surgery?

- ⚙️ Increases your risk of **complications after surgery** (like heart problems and pneumonia)
- ⚙️ Slows your body's ability to **heal incisions**, increasing risk of infections
- ⚙️ Can change how well your body responds to **anesthesia and pain medications**
- ⚙️ Increases your risk of **nausea and vomiting after surgery**



For more detailed information and resources about cannabis use, visit

sscbc.ca/patient-prehab-resources/cannabis-use



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DELIRIUM AND SURGERY



Delirium is a type of sudden confusion that can happen after surgery, especially in older adults or people with certain health conditions.

How delirium affects you



Feeling confused or disoriented (not knowing where you are)



Changes in alertness (very sleepy or very restless)



Trouble paying attention or following conversations



Seeing or hearing things that are not really there

What you can do now – start this week



Move your body

Aim for ~20 minutes of activity daily (e.g., walking) and strength exercises (e.g., STABL program) 2x/week. If you need a tailored plan, connect with a physiotherapist.



Plan ahead

Talk with your loved ones about your wishes if you become very unwell. Choose someone who can make decisions on your behalf if needed.



Improve your habits

Stop smoking. Reduce alcohol safely. Avoid cannabis before surgery.



Eat to build strength

Eat protein at every meal. See the nutrition resources for simple meal ideas. If you need more support, connect with a dietitian.

Why does delirium matter for surgery?

Delirium after surgery can:

- ⚙ Increase your risk of complications after surgery
- ⚙ Can lead to a longer hospital stay
- ⚙ Can make recovery slower and more difficult
- ⚙ Can be distressing

AFTER SURGERY

- ⚙ Always wear your glasses and hearing aids after surgery.
- ⚙ Aim to keep a regular day-night routine (lights on and up during the day, quiet at night).
- ⚙ Ask family or friends to be nearby while you are in hospital.
- ⚙ Start moving as soon as you are safe to do so.
- ⚙ Avoid dehydration.



For more detailed information and resources about delirium, visit

sscbc.ca/patient-prehab-resources/delirium

For family and caregivers

Help reorient your loved one after surgery; remind them where they are and why. Bring familiar items like blankets, pillows, and family photos. Encourage wearing glasses and hearing aids, safe early mobility, and a day-night routine. Let staff know if something is concerning or different.



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FRAILTY AND SURGERY



Frailty means your body has less strength and reserve, which can make recovery from surgery slower or more difficult.

People living with frailty might notice



Feeling Slower



Weakness & Muscle Loss



Needing more help with daily tasks like getting dressed



Feeling Tired



Weight loss without trying



Taking a long time to recover from illness

What you can do now – start this week



Move your body

Prioritize strength and balance exercises 2x/week (e.g., STABL program) and aim for 20 minutes of aerobic activity daily (e.g., brisk walking). If you need a tailored plan, connect with a physiotherapist.



Plan ahead

Talk with your loved ones about your wishes if you become very unwell. Choose someone who can make decisions on your behalf if needed.



Improve your habits

Stop smoking. Reduce alcohol safely. Avoid cannabis before surgery.



See your primary care provider before surgery

They can review and optimize your medications before surgery and may refer you for a geriatric assessment.



Eat to build strength

Eat protein at every meal. See the nutrition resources for simple meal ideas. If you need more support, connect with a dietitian.



Assess your fall risk

Learn about making your home fall proof and getting up safely after a fall.

Why does Frailty matter?

People living with frailty are more likely to:

- Have complications after an operation
- Find it hard to return to normal activities after surgery
- Need more support at home after discharge
- Be discharged to a care home
- Spend longer in hospital

Talking about these risks helps you choose the right treatment for you. Some people with frailty may decide not to have surgery.



For more detailed information and resources about frailty, visit

sscbc.ca/patient-prehab-resources/frailty



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GETTING ACTIVE BEFORE SURGERY



Being active before surgery can help you heal faster and recover more easily. Moving your body helps your heart, lungs, and muscles work better. Even a few weeks of regular activity before surgery can make a big difference.

How regular exercise helps your body



Lowers your risk of early death by ~30%



Lowers your risk of heart disease and stroke by ~15–20%



Helps prevent type 2 diabetes by up to ~50%



Even a little activity is better than none—the biggest gains come from getting started

What you can do now – start this week



Aim for strength and balance exercises twice per week.



Practice deep breathing every day and start again right after surgery (slow breath in 5 seconds, hold 5 seconds, slow breath out through pursed lips 5 seconds. Repeat 5 times).



Aim for 30 minutes of moderate aerobic activity 5 days per week (able to talk but not sing)

Get support

You do not have to do this alone.

- Visit findingbalancebc.ca → search “exercise” for guided programs like STABL
- See a physiotherapist to help design a program for you (find a physio at bcphysio.org)
- Join Prehab Rx (www.prehabrx.ca) a free virtual pre-surgery exercise program
- Join **Choose to Move** (a free 3-month activity coaching program)
 - Call **604-875-4111 ext 21787**
 - Visit choosetomove.ca

Why does exercise matter for surgery?

- Cuts the risk of complications by nearly half (~50%) (fewer heart, lung, and infection problems)
- Helps you recover faster and leave hospital 1–2 days sooner
- Lowers your risk of death after surgery by ~25–30%



For more detailed information and resources about exercise, visit

sscbc.ca/patient-prehab-resources/physical-activity



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GETTING STARTED WITH STRENGTH & BALANCE EXERCISES

If you're not sure how to start exercising before surgery, this guide can help. These simple exercises are designed to build strength and improve balance, which are key for a safe recovery.

How to use this guide



Focus on slow, controlled movements



Do these exercises 2–3 times per week

Safety tips

- 1 Use support (chair or counter) if you feel unsteady
- 2 Stop if you feel pain, dizziness, or unwell
- 3 Call 911 if you have chest pain or trouble breathing

Don't forget aerobic activity.
Aim for 30 minutes
5 days per week

Aerobic activity examples
(aim to be able to talk but not sing while you do this):

- Walking
- Swimming or pool walking
- Stationary bike or elliptical
- Gardening or light activity

Start where you are. Even a small amount of movement will help your recovery.

Strength and Balance for Life (STABL) Level 1—SIT

If you cannot stand for 30 seconds or use a wheelchair most of the time

Use a sturdy chair and table. Start by sitting tall: feet flat on the floor, top of head reaching toward the ceiling. Breathe slowly.

Heel and Toe Lifts

Lift both heels, hold 3s, lower. Then lift toes, hold 3s, lower. Repeat 4–6 times.



Reach and Row

Reach both arms forward (palms up). Pull elbows back keeping them by your sides. Repeat 4–6 times.



Side Step

Step one foot to the side, press firmly, return. Repeat 4–6 times per foot.



Straight Leg Stretch

Straighten one knee, point toes away, then flex toes toward you. Repeat 4–6 times per leg.



Slow Marching

Sit tall away from the back of the chair. Lift one foot, then the other. 4–6 times.



Prepare to Stand

Press both feet firmly into the floor for 3s as if about to stand. Relax. Repeat 4–6 times.



Arm Push

Put hands on a sturdy table. Bend arms to bring chest to table, push back up. Repeat 4–6 times.



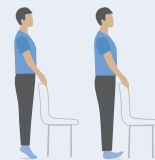
STABL Level 2—STAND

If you can walk but need support (like a counter) to stand safely

Use a counter and a sturdy chair. Stand tall with both hands on the counter. Feet shoulder-distance apart. Breathe slowly.

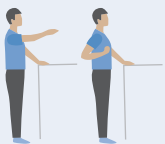
Heel and Toe Lifts

Lift both heels, hold 3s, lower. Then lift toes, hold 3s, lower. Repeat 4–6 times.



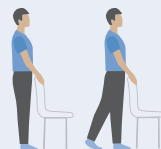
Reach and Row

With one hand on the counter, reach the other arm forward, pull elbow back. Repeat 4–6 times per arm.



Side Step/Back Step

Step one foot to the side, return. Step foot behind you, return. Repeat 4–6 times per foot.



Balance on One Leg

Bend one knee to lift your foot behind you. Hold for 4–6s. Switch legs.



Arm Push

Put hands on counter. Bend arms to bring chest toward counter, push away. Repeat 4–6 times.



Sit to Stand

Sit tall in a chair. Lean forward, push down with feet to stand. Slowly lower back down. Repeat 4–6 times.



Calf Stretch

Step one foot behind you (toes forward). Bend back knee slightly. Hold 4–6s. Switch legs.



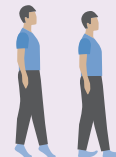
STABL Level 3—MOVE

If you can stand and move comfortably without support

Stand tall beside a counter or wall. Use only one hand, or progress to just your fingertips for support. Keep your head up. Breathe Slowly.

Heel and Toe Walking

Take 4–6 steps forward on your toes. Then take 4–6 steps forward on your heels.



Reach and Row

Reach both arms forward, pull elbows back. Repeat 4–6 times.



Walk in a line

Walk forward, touching heel to toe with each step [4–6 steps]. Slowly walk backward toe to heel.



Slow Sitting

Stand in front of a chair (back against wall). Slowly lower hips to sit. Push down to stand. Repeat 4–6 times.



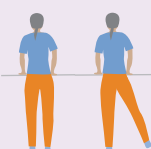
Arm Push

Stand facing a wall. Hands at shoulder height. Bend arms to bring chest to wall, push back. Repeat 4–6 times.



Foot Tapping

Tap one toe to the front, then side, then behind you. Repeat 4–6 times per foot.



Half Lunges

Step one foot behind you. Bend both knees slightly. Push into back foot to return. Repeat 4–6 times per leg.



Get support if you need more direction
(use the QR code to access resources online)

- Try PrehabRx (free online physiotherapy support)
- Join Choose to Move (free exercise coaching program)
- Call 811 to speak with an exercise physiologist for free
- Find a physiotherapist at bcphysio.org (no referral needed)



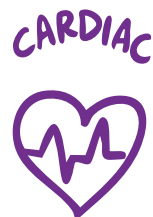
For more detailed information and resources about exercise, visit

sscbc.ca/patient-prehab-resources/physical-activity



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HEART HEALTH AND SURGERY



Surgery places stress on your heart. If you have heart conditions, make sure they are well managed before surgery.

What conditions should be checked before surgery?



High blood pressure



Coronary artery disease (blockages or prior heart attack)



Heart rhythm problems (atrial fibrillation)



Heart failure (weakened heart muscle)

What you can do now – start this week



Get new or concerning heart symptoms checked before your operation

If you have chest pain, shortness of breath, or fainting spells book an appointment to discuss these with your family doctor or nurse practitioner before surgery.



Understand your risks for surgery

People with heart conditions have a higher risk of complications after surgery.



If you have a heart specialist (cardiologist), it is a good idea to check in before surgery



Take your medications to optimize your heart before surgery by controlling blood pressure, heart rate, and heart conditions.



Stay active, eat well, and stop smoking.

Why does heart health matter for surgery?

Surgery puts extra stress on your body and heart.

- ⚙ About 1 in 30 people having major surgery will have a serious heart-related complication
- ⚙ Chronic heart conditions (like high blood pressure, irregular heart rhythm, coronary artery disease, or heart failure) increase your risk of heart problems after surgery
- ⚙ Your risk is much lower when these conditions are well managed before surgery



For more detailed information and resources about heart health, visit

sscbc.ca/patient-prehab-resources/heart-health



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MANAGING PAIN AFTER SURGERY



Some pain after surgery is normal.
The goal is not to remove all pain, but to keep it controlled enough that you can do the things that help you recover.

What is the goal?

Your goal is a pain level where you can:



Take deep breaths and cough



Get up and move



Do your exercises or physiotherapy



Rest and/or sleep when it is time to do so



This is usually mild to moderate pain—not zero pain.

What you can do now – start this week

Access the following resources using the QR code.



Free Managing Pain Before and After Surgery Course [Pain BC]



Power Over Pain Portal
(additional courses and resources)



If you live with chronic pain
Empowered Relief [Pain BC]



Ask to see anesthesia before surgery
to discuss pain management especially if you live with chronic pain, take opioid medications regularly or have had difficulty with pain after surgery in the past.



Start gentle movement at home (2-3 days a week)
Gentle Movement at Home video series [Pain BC]

How is pain managed for surgery?

Your health care team uses a combination of strategies:

- Non-opioid medications [e.g., acetaminophen, anti-inflammatories if safe]
- Local or regional anesthesia [nerve blocks, freezing]
- Opioids only when needed, at the lowest effective dose for the shortest period of time
- Non-medication strategies [ice, positioning, relaxation, movement]



For more detailed information and resources about managing pain, visit

sscbc.ca/patient-prehab-resources/managing-pain



Important

Learn more about pain medication and safe opioid use via the QR code.



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MENTAL WELLBEING AND SURGERY



Looking after your mental wellbeing before surgery can help you recover faster and feel better. Your mind and body are connected. How you feel emotionally affects your physical health and your recovery after surgery.

How anxiety and depression affect your health



Increases your risk of heart disease and stroke by ~30–40%



Increases your risk of chronic health problems (up to 2x higher) (including pain, lung disease, diabetes, and heart disease)



Can weaken your immune system and slow healing (leading to more infections and delayed recovery)

What you can do now – start this week



If your anxiety or depression feel difficult to manage on your own, ask your health care team if a referral to Mind-Space.ca is right for you.



Access Support Online

Help Starts Here

Information and supports for mental wellbeing in BC

Anxiety Canada

Tools to manage anxiety and worry

BounceBack

Free program (online or phone) for low mood, stress, or anxiety

Call 211 or visit bc.211.ca for local supports

First Nations Health Authority

Indigenous-specific wellness resources

Why does untreated anxiety and depression matter for surgery?

- Increases your risk of complications after surgery by ~40–70%
- Can slow recovery and lead to longer hospital stays
- Increases your risk of readmission to hospital by ~80%



For more detailed information and resources about mental wellbeing, visit

sscbc.ca/patient-prehab-resources/mental-wellbeing



If You Are in Crisis and Need Immediate Help

National Suicide Crisis Helpline: Call or text *988

BC Mental Health and Crisis Response Line: 310-6789 or 1-800-SUICIDE

Kids Help Phone: Text CONNECT to 686868 or call 1-800-668-6868

KU-UUS First Nations and Aboriginal Crisis Support Line: 1-800-588-8717



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NUTRITION AND SURGERY



Eating well before surgery can help you heal faster and recover more easily. Food gives your body the fuel it needs to prepare for surgery and repair itself afterward—especially if you have had changes in your appetite or weight.

How good nutrition helps your body



Helps your body heal wounds and rebuild tissue



Supports your immune system to fight infection



Maintains your strength and energy

What you can do now – start this week



Focus on getting enough protein, carbohydrates and healthy fats to prepare your body and improve your recovery. Refer to QR code for examples



If your appetite is low
Eat smaller meals more often, choose high-energy, high-protein foods like smoothies or nutritional shakes.



Eat 3 balanced meals per day



Veggies

Eat a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables

Protein

Aim for 20-30g of protein at every meal

Carbs

Choose whole grain foods



Important

Anyone can connect with a dietitian by calling 811 or visiting bcdietitians.ca. This is very important to do before surgery if you have **lost weight without trying**, have a **low appetite**, **have trouble eating enough**, or have a medical condition like **diabetes**, **kidney disease**, or **cancer**.

Why does good nutrition matter for surgery?

- Supports faster healing to lower your risk of infections
- Helps you stay strong and independent during recovery
- May reduce your time in hospital



For more detailed information and resources about nutrition, visit

sscbc.ca/patient-prehab-resources/nutrition



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WEIGHT, HEALTH, AND SURGERY



People living with obesity deserve respectful, non-judgmental care. Weight is only one part of your overall health—your care team also considers things like diabetes, heart health, sleep, strength, and mobility to understand your individual risk.

How weight affects your body



Can affect your breathing and lung function



May increase strain on your heart and circulation



Can impact blood sugar

What you can do now – start this week

Focus on improving your health—not just your weight—before surgery.



Move your body

Aim for ~20 minutes of activity daily (e.g., walking) and strength exercises (e.g., STABL program) 2x/week. If you need a tailored plan, connect with a physiotherapist.



Eat to build strength

Eat protein at every meal. See the nutrition resources for simple meal ideas. If you need more support, connect with a dietitian.



Work with your care team

While awaiting surgery ask your health care team if you should be checked for **sleep apnea**, **diabetes** or **heart disease**, or if you might benefit from a referral to an **obesity medicine expert**.

Why does weight matter for surgery?

As body weight and related health conditions increase, some risks may also increase:

- Higher risk of **breathing and heart complications**
- Increased risk of **blood clots**
- Higher chance of **wound infections and slower healing**
- Anesthesia and surgical time may be longer and more difficult



For more detailed information and resources about obesity, visit

sscbc.ca/patient-prehab-resources/obesity



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QUITTING SMOKING BEFORE SURGERY



Smoking affects how your body responds to surgery, anesthesia, and healing.

How smoking affects your body



Shortens your life by about 10 years



Greatly increases your risk of heart attack and lung disease



Increases your risk of many types of cancer

What you can do now – Start Today



Stop smoking now and stay smoke-free until you are fully healed.



If you choose to keep smoking:

- Do not smoke or vape for at least 24 hours prior to surgery
- If you can't quit completely, cut back—but aim to stop

Get support

You are more likely to quit successfully with support than by trying to quit on your own.

- Talk to your pharmacist or primary care provider about creating a quit plan. They can prescribe nicotine replacement therapy (patch, gum, lozenge, spray) or other medications to reduce your cravings
- Visit QuitNow.ca for free information, coaching, and online support.

Why does smoking matter for surgery?

- Increases your risk of lung complications like pneumonia after surgery
- Slows healing of your incision which increases your risk of an infection
- Increases your risk of heart problems, like a heart attack, during and after surgery



For more detailed information and resources about quitting smoking, visit

sscbc.ca/patient-prehab-resources/quitting-smoking



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SLEEP APNEA AND SURGERY



Treating sleep apnea before surgery can improve your recovery and keep you safe. Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA) is when breathing stops or becomes shallow during sleep. Many people have it and don't know.

How untreated sleep apnea affects your body



Increases risk of heart disease, stroke, and abnormal heart rhythms by 2–4×



Causes poor sleep and daytime fatigue



Affects your mood, thinking, and quality of life

What you can do now – start this week



If you have sleep apnea and you have a CPAP/BiPAP/ Mouthguard

Bring your device with you to the hospital. Use your device before, after surgery and every time you sleep or nap.



If you are told you might have sleep apnea

Get your sleep study testing done as soon as possible before surgery and start treatment if recommended to reduce your risk after surgery.



If you have sleep apnea but are not using your treatment device

Try to restart using your device before surgery. If it is uncomfortable or not working, contact your sleep clinic to try to adjust it [different mask type/ device type/settings].

Why does treating sleep apnea matter for surgery?

- ~2× higher risk of serious breathing problems after surgery (anesthesia and pain medications make your airway more likely to collapse)
- 2–3× higher risk of heart problems (heart attack, heart failure, or irregular heartbeat)
- ~2× more likely to need ICU care or breathing support after surgery
- Using CPAP lowers your risk significantly

AFTER SURGERY

- Use your device **every time you sleep or rest** (especially the first week)
- Sleep on your **side or with your head raised**
- Avoid **alcohol, cannabis, and sedating medications**
- Use the **lowest dose of pain medication possible**



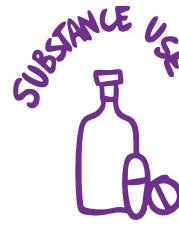
For more detailed information and resources about sleep apnea, visit

sscbc.ca/patient-prehab-resources/sleep-apnea



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REDUCING SUBSTANCE USE BEFORE SURGERY



Substances like stimulants (e.g. cocaine), opioids (e.g. oxycodone), psychedelics (e.g. LSD, MDMA), sedatives (e.g. benzodiazepines), and inhalants (e.g. nitrous oxide) can be dangerous to use around the time of surgery—even if used occasionally.

How substance use affects your body



Increases your risk of overdose due to the current toxic drug supply



Puts stress on your heart and increases your risk of heart problems



Affects your breathing and lungs, especially when substances are inhaled

What you can do now – start this week



Reduce or stop non-prescription drugs:

Avoid drugs *before* surgery (start now) and until you are healed.

- **If you choose to use:** try to reduce or stop at least 2 days (48 hours) before surgery, avoid stimulants (like cocaine or methamphetamine) for at least 2 weeks before surgery, and do not come to surgery intoxicated (high).



If you use non-prescription drugs daily or nearly every day:

- Stopping suddenly can cause withdrawal symptoms which may be dangerous in some cases
- **What to do:** Work with your care team to create a **safe plan**, which may include a **gradual taper**

Why does substance use matter for surgery?

- Increases your risk of complications after surgery like infections
- Can make anesthesia less predictable and harder to manage
- Increases the risk of withdrawal during or after surgery, which can be serious
- Can lead to a more difficult recovery and longer hospital stay

If you take opioid agonist therapy (OAT): (methadone, Suboxone, or Kadian)

- **Keep taking your medication as prescribed**, including the day of surgery
- Meet with your prescriber to review your dose and make a plan for after surgery



Get support

You do not have to do this alone.

Make an appointment with your care team, family doctor or nurse practitioner

- Call 811 to find local supports and services
- Call the Alcohol and Drug Information Line (1-800-663-1441)



For more detailed information and resources about substance use, visit

sscbc.ca/patient-prehab-resources/substance-use



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SUPPORT AFTER SURGERY



After surgery, your body needs time to rest, heal, and regain strength. Having the right support can make recovery smoother and reduce complications.

Who Needs Support After Surgery?

For many procedures, especially same-day (daycare) surgeries, you must have a responsible adult to take you home. This person should:



Help you get home safely



Stay with you overnight (or longer, if needed)



Help with meals, mobility, medications, and personal care



Watch for any signs that something might be wrong

What you can do now – start this week



Arrange a support person before your surgery to help you get home and stay with you.



If you do not have support:

- Call 211 to find local support services
- Search online: BC Government → “Home and Community Care”
- Ask your care team to connect you with resources early (social worker or home support)

Why does having support matter for surgery?

- You may have limited mobility, pain, or sedation effects after surgery
- Having support helps you follow instructions and notice problems early
- Without support, your discharge may be delayed or unsafe and your surgery may need to be delayed.



For more detailed information and resources about support after surgery, visit

sscbc.ca/patient-prehab-resources/support-after-surgery



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VOICING WHAT MATTERS MOST AND SURGERY



Before surgery, a “goals of care” conversation is a discussion with your medical team about what matters most to you—so if things don’t go as expected and you cannot speak for yourself during or after surgery, we know your wishes and who should speak for you.

What “goals of care” means



What matters most to you for a good quality of life



What types of treatment you would accept if complications occur



Who should make medical decisions for you if you cannot

What you can do now – start this week

Answer these 3 questions to prepare for a goals of care conversation with your care team.



Think about what matters most to you:

- What activities or abilities are most important for your quality of life?



Who should speak for you if you cannot?

- Choose someone you trust to make decisions for you
- Make sure they understand your wishes
- Write it down → use tools like: My Voice: Advance Care Planning Guide, What Matters Most to Me Worksheet
- Talk about it: Share your wishes with your family, loved ones, and care team



If things don’t go as planned, what would you want us to know?

- Would you want chest compressions (CPR) or life support if your heart stopped?
- Are there outcomes you would not want? (e.g., prolonged ICU stay, breathing machines, needing full-time care)
- Many people feel that if they were unlikely to recover well, they would prefer a natural death rather than aggressive treatments like CPR or life support.

Why does goals of care matter for surgery?

Surgery can be life-changing. While we always hope for the best, it is important to plan for all possibilities. Having this conversation helps:

- Ensure your care team knows your wishes if unexpected situations arise
- Reduce stress and confusion for you and your family
- Make sure the treatment you receive is right for you



For more detailed information and resources about goals of care, visit

sscbc.ca/patient-prehab-resources/goals-of-care



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