

Guide to navigating...

Surgery

What is surgery?

Surgery could include various procedures, such as lumpectomy, mastectomy, reconstruction, oophorectomy, hysterectomy, among others. These procedures are intended to remove tumors, biopsy areas for surveillance, reconstruct treated regions, and for prevention.

What are some common nutrition-related side effects?

- Nausea and/or vomiting, from anesthesia
- Constipation, diarrhea, and/or change in bowel habits, from medications
- Appetite changes, from medications and changes in physical activity
- Lymphedema, from lymph drainage system disruption

How can I prepare for surgery?

- Focus on variety in your diet for 1 to 2 weeks prior to surgery, incorporating various plant foods, like colorful fruits and vegetables, to assure you are meeting your daily intake needs of vitamins A, B, C, D, E, and zinc. These nutrients support skin integrity, wound healing, and immunity!
- Prioritize high-quality carbohydrates, like fruits, starchy vegetables, beans, lentils, and whole grains, 3 to 4 days prior to surgery. Increasing carbohydrate intake to around 50-60% of your daily intake can maximize glycogen stores for increased energy needs during and after surgery.
- Increase your protein intake by trying to consume 1.2 to 2 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight per day. Ideally, space your protein in bouts of 20-40 gram during your meals and snacks each day. Consume complete proteins, rich in all the essential amino acids to support cell repair and wound healing.
- Maintain adequate hydration leading up to surgery, aiming for at least 6 to 8 cups of water per day. Opt for water or other unsweetened beverages when achieving your hydration goals to promote skin integrity and wound healing.
- Follow your healthcare team's request for fasting pre-operatively. Typically, you must fast from all food and non-clear liquids 6 to 12 hours prior to surgery arrival and cease intake of clear liquids 2 hours before arrival.

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How can I support myself nutritionally after surgery?

- Maintain adequate, well-space protein of 1.2 to 2 grams per kilogram of body weight after surgery. Through rehabilitation, increase your protein goal to a minimum of 1.6 grams per kilogram per day to support continued healing. If low appetite impacts your ability to consume adequate protein, consider supplementing with a smoothie including high protein nuts, seeds, dairy, or protein powders.
- Prioritize vitamin C and zinc during the recovery period, as these nutrients play the most major role in wound healing and immunity. Vitamin C rich foods include fruits and vegetables, while zinc rich foods are primarily sources of protein, like fish, beans, and nuts.
- Focus on sources of both soluble and insoluble fiber to support bowel health after surgery. The goal for women is 25 grams of fiber per day for women and 38 grams of fiber per day for men (or 21 and 31 grams for those respectively for those 51 and up). High fiber foods include whole grains, beans, lentils, fruits, and vegetables!
- Increase your hydration from before surgery, with the goal to achieve 9 to 12 cups of water per day. The increased hydration will continue to support wound healing, but also promote bowel regularity after surgery.
- Incorporate probiotic-rich foods, like kefir, sauerkraut, kimchi, and miso regularly into your diet to support an improved gut microbiome and promote immune function.

For more information on nutrition and management of treatment-related side effects, visit our all-access [Nutrition Hub](#), and view our [Side Effect Guide](#).