

Recovering from Cushing's Disease

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- It can take time (months or longer) to recover from Cushing's Disease, even after having surgery or treatment. Your body needs to recover from the effects of high cortisol (steroid) levels.
- Having high cortisol levels damages your body, including your muscles and your sleep/wake cycle.
- **As you recover, you may have symptoms like:**
 - › Muscle aches
 - › Muscle weakness
 - › Fatigue (feeling very tired)
 - › Mood swings, like low mood (feeling down) or feeling very sleepy during the day
 - › Loss of appetite (not feeling hungry)
 - › Nausea (upset stomach)
 - › Stomach pain

Call your doctor if you have vomiting (throwing up).

If you have high blood pressure:

- Your blood pressure should get better as you recover.
- **If you take medication for high blood pressure**, over time you should be able to take a lower dose (amount) or stop taking it.

If you have diabetes:

- Check your blood sugar often. Your blood sugar levels should get better as you recover.
- **If you use insulin or take medication for diabetes**, over time you should be able to take a lower dose or stop taking it.

What can I do to help my recovery?

Keep a monthly journal

- Recording your symptoms once a month can help you see your progress.

If you have muscle aches and/or muscle weakness:

- Work with a physical therapist to make a plan to help your muscles and your balance.
- Slowly do more activity over time.
 - › Start with low-impact activities (like water aerobics, yoga, or walking).

- Take warm baths.
- Get massages.

If you have fatigue:

- Try not to sleep during the day. If you must sleep during the day, only take short naps.
- Avoid using electronics and being near bright lights for 1 hour (60 minutes) before bedtime.
- Sleep in a cool, dark room.

Eat healthy

Try to get enough nutrients (like fibre, protein, calcium).

- **Foods that are high in fibre:**
 - › Apples, pears, and oranges
 - › Berries
 - › Cooked carrots and peas, baked potatoes
 - › Bran cereal and oatmeal
 - › Whole grain pasta and bread
 - › Brown rice
- **Foods that are high in protein:**
 - › Beef, chicken, and fish
 - › Beans, split peas, lentils, and chickpeas
 - › Cheese, cottage cheese, yogurt, and milk
 - › Almonds, hemp seed hearts, peanuts, and pumpkin seeds
 - › Edamame, fortified soy drinks, tempeh, and tofu
- **Foods that are high in calcium:**
 - › Cheese, yogurt, and milk
 - › Canned sardines and salmon with bones
 - › Calcium-fortified foods, like some juices, plant-based drinks, and tofu
 - › Broccoli, kale, and bok choy
- **Do not** take herbal products, vitamins, or supplements.

What symptoms should I watch for after my recovery?

- Cushing's Disease can come back. Tell your health care team if you have any of the following:
 - › High blood pressure
 - › High blood sugar levels
 - › Weight gain
 - › Trouble sleeping
 - › Bruising easily
 - › Purple stretch marks around your abdomen (stomach area)

Tell your health care team if you:

- **Feel very thirsty and have to urinate (pee) often**
 - › Only drink when you are thirsty.
 - › **Do not** only drink fluids instead of eating solid foods.
- **Lose weight fast without trying.** If you do not own a scale, notice how your clothes fit. Track this information in your monthly journal.
- **Have low blood pressure.** If you do not own a blood pressure monitor, watch for these symptoms:
 - › Feeling dizzy, lightheaded, or like you are going to faint
 - › Confusion
 - › Nausea or vomiting
 - › Cold, clammy skin
 - › Blurry vision
- **Have low blood sugar.** Common symptoms of low blood sugar include:
 - › Sweating
 - › Trouble concentrating
 - › Shaking
 - › Feeling drowsy (very sleepy) and/or becoming unconscious (if your blood sugar is very low)
 - › Headache
 - › Feeling weak or dizzy

If it is an emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest Emergency Department right away.

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find all patient education resources here:
www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>



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