

After My Surgery

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Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time: call 811 or visit <https://811.novascotia.ca>
Learn about other programs and services in your community: call 211 or visit <http://ns.211.ca>

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The information is not intended to be and does not constitute health care or medical advice.
If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

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The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.

The name of my surgery is:

My surgeon's name:

My surgeon's phone:

[illegible]

After My Surgery

[illegible]

How will I feel?

- After surgery, most people feel tired and have some soreness or pain. You may have an upset stomach and have stiff or sore muscles.
- Your health care team will try to keep you as comfortable as possible.

What can I do?

Rest quietly today. Tomorrow, try to get up and walk unless your surgeon says not to. Ask for help the first time you get up. You may feel dizzy or weak. This is normal.

- Anesthetic medication used during surgery can limit your movement and change your reaction times. After surgery:
 - › **Do not** drive a car or operate machinery for 24 hours (1 day).
 - › **Do not** sign any legal documents or important papers for 24 hours.
 - › **Do not** drink alcohol for 24 to 48 hours. Ask your health care team if you have questions about this.
 - › **Do not** drink alcohol while taking pain pills.

For the first 24 hours after surgery:

- **Have a responsible adult stay with you.**
- **Do not** care for small children or be a main caregiver.

- If you have questions or concerns, in Nova Scotia you can call 811 to talk with a registered nurse about your health care questions 24/7.

When can I eat?

- Follow the instructions given to you by your nurse or surgeon.
- It may take time for your appetite to go back to normal. When you are able, it is best to start with clear juices, pop, tea, clear soups, crackers, or toast.
- The day after your surgery, you may eat normally.
- Remember to eat slowly.
- Eating well-balanced, healthy meals will help your body heal and regain strength after surgery.
- **Do not drink alcohol for 24 to 48 hours.** Ask your health care team if you have questions about this.

If you have any of these signs of infection:

- › Fever (temperature above 38.5° C/101.3° F) that is not controlled with acetaminophen (Tylenol®), or lasts longer than 48 hours (2 days)
- › Chills
- › More swelling, redness, or warmth around the incision (cut)
- › More drainage (liquid) from the incision
- › A bad smell from the incision
- › Pain that is not helped by the pain pills you are taking

Call your surgeon:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

If your surgeon is not available, call your primary health care provider, 811, or go to the nearest ED. Tell staff you are a post-op patient and give your surgeon's name.

Follow-up appointment:

Yes ☐ No ☐

If you need a follow-up appointment, the clinic or surgeon's office will notify you within 2 to 3 days.

Your next medication is due at:

_____ a.m. ☐ p.m. ☐

- If your pain gets worse and cannot be managed by the medications you were prescribed, call your doctor. If you cannot reach your doctor, go to the nearest Emergency Department (ED) right away.

What if I use a CPAP machine?

- Use your CPAP machine whenever you are sleeping.
- Use your CPAP machine when you are resting or napping during the day while taking pain pills.

When to call your surgeon or primary health care provider:

- If you have bleeding:
- › Place your hand over the dressings and press firmly.
 - › Place the affected part up on pillows above the level of your heart, if possible.

If the bleeding does not stop after 30 minutes (half an hour), go to the nearest ED right away.
If you have severe (very bad) bleeding, go to the nearest ED right away.

What should I do if I have pain?

- It is normal to have pain after surgery.
- You may be given a prescription for pain pills.
 - › If you did not get your prescription filled before your surgery, have it filled at a pharmacy (drugstore) on your way home.
 - › If you have pain, start taking your pain pills as soon as you can. **Do not** wait for your pain to be severe (very bad).
 - › Take your pain pills as directed by your surgeon and follow the instructions on the label.
 - › **Do not drink alcohol while taking pain pills.**
- If you were not given a prescription for pain pills, you may take acetaminophen (Tylenol®). Follow the instructions on the label.
- Using an ice pack (or a bag of frozen vegetables) can help with pain and swelling.
 - › Always wrap the ice pack in something (like a towel) before placing it against your body.
- **Do not put ice directly on your skin.**
 - › Do this **every 4 hours** while you are awake.
- Do not use for longer than 20 minutes at a time.
- **Make sure you keep the area dry.**
 - › Continue while you have swelling (3 to 5 days).

- If you had surgery on your arm/hand or leg/foot, place it up on pillows above the level of your heart. This should help relieve the pain, aching, or throbbing.

How do I take care of my dressings?

- Keep your dressings dry.
- If you can see drainage through your dressings, you may replace the dressing. You can buy sterile dressings from any drugstore.
- If your dressings get wet, a new sterile dressing will be needed. Ask your surgeon if you have questions about this.
- **Do not** remove your dressings for ____ days.
- If you have Steri-Strips™, they should stay on for 7 to 10 days.

Do not shower until your dressing has been removed.

- **Do not** have a bath unless your incision is healed, or as instructed by your surgeon.

When can I drive?

- **Do not** drive a car for 24 hours after surgery or until your surgeon says it is OK. Pain can limit your movements and reaction time.

- Before driving, be sure you are pain-free and can drive comfortably.
- Pain pills containing narcotics can make you sleepy. **Do not drive while taking pain pills.**

When can I go back to work?

Ask your surgeon when you can safely go back to work.

When can I have sex?

Ask your surgeon when you can have sex after surgery. For most people, it is OK to start having sex after your follow-up appointment with your surgeon.

What if I have diagnosed sleep apnea?

For ALL sleep apnea patients:

- Sleep in a semi-upright position or on your side for the first 24 hours after surgery. **Do not** sleep lying flat on your back.
- Use only medications prescribed for you by your doctor.
- **Do not drink alcohol.**
- Use your dental device for sleeping if you used it before surgery.