

Before & After Surgery Toolkit

A calm, step-by-step plan to prepare your body, your questions, and your home, and to heal well afterward.

Prepared by MK Wellness · Cypress, TX · mkwellness.care · Updated October 2026



Take a breath. You don't have to do this all at once. Pick where you are below, and start with one step today.

A NOTE FROM DANI

Surgery is one day. How you prepare and how you recover shape the rest.

Whether it's a knee, a heart, a tummy tuck, or a C-section, surgery asks a lot of your body. The weeks before and after are a powerful window: going in stronger, calmer, and well fed helps you heal, and good support afterward helps you get back to life sooner. Hospitals know this too; Enhanced Recovery After Surgery (ERAS) programs are built on exactly that.

This toolkit walks you through it one step at a time, with the questions to ask, the warning signs to know, and how to support your body along the way. Your surgeon's instructions always come first.

How to use this toolkit

1. **Tell us where you are** (just below) to see your first six steps.
2. **Tick each box as you go.** Your checkmarks save on this phone or computer, so you can come back anytime.
3. **Bring your questions** to appointments: print them, or email them to yourself. Talk through anything new with your surgeon before you start it.

Where to start

Surgery is coming up

1. Walk every day (step 2)
2. Eat protein at every meal (step 2)
3. Stop smoking and vaping now (step 2)
4. Bring every bottle (step 3)
5. "Which of my medicines and supplements should I stop, and when?" (step 3)
6. Stock easy, protein-rich meals (step 5)

The first two weeks after

1. Keep the warning signs where you can see them (step 7)
2. Walk early and often (step 7)
3. Follow your pain plan (step 7)
4. Follow your blood clot plan (step 7)
5. Protein at every meal and snack (step 8)
6. Accept help, and rest (step 7)

Weeks 2 to 12

1. Do your physical therapy and home exercises (step 10)
2. Once the incision has fully closed (step 9)
3. Protect new scars from the sun (step 9)
4. Once your surgeon clears you (step 9)
5. Watch your mood (step 10)
6. After your surgeon clears you (step 11)

What the research labels mean

STRONG National guidelines recommend it, based on many trials.

PROMISING Positive randomized or controlled human trials; still being confirmed.

EMERGING Early human data: small studies, case series, clinic data.

EXPERIMENTAL Lab and animal studies plus personal stories; human trials still needed.

The 12 steps

1

Get organized

One folder, one list, and one helper make everything easier.

- ☐ **Make a surgery folder** (paper or phone): your surgery date and arrival time, pre-op instructions, your medicine and supplement list, and your surgeon's after-hours number.
- ☐ **Line up a helper** for surgery day and the first few days: a ride home, someone to stay with you, and help with meals and errands.
- ☐ **Plan time off** from work and other duties, and ask your surgeon how long recovery usually takes.
- ☐ **Ask to record your pre-op visit:** "Do you mind if I record so I don't miss anything?" [QUESTION TO ASK](#)
- ☐ **Sign in to your patient portal** so you can see instructions and message your team.

2

Get stronger before surgery

Prehab: the weeks before surgery are training for recovery.

Many people start 4 to 6 weeks before surgery when they can. Patients who go in stronger often get their function back sooner, and that's why ERAS programs build in preparation.

- ☐ **Walk every day**, a little farther each week, as your surgeon allows.
- ☐ **Build strength and practice deep breathing.** Leg strength helps you get up after surgery; deep breathing helps your lungs.
- ☐ **Eat protein at every meal:** eggs, fish, chicken, beef, or Greek yogurt. Healing tissue is built from protein.
- ☐ **Steady your blood sugar.** High blood sugar slows healing and raises infection risk. If you have diabetes, ask what your numbers should be before surgery. [QUESTION TO ASK](#)
- ☐ **Stop smoking and vaping now.** People who quit about 4 weeks or more before surgery have fewer complications, and every extra week helps (World Health Organization). **STRONG**
- ☐ **Cut back on alcohol**, which slows healing and affects anesthesia.
- ☐ **Protect your sleep and calm your stress:** a steady bedtime, morning light, and one calming practice a day.

- ☐ **Get a dental checkup** before joint, heart, or other major surgery. Mouth infections can spread, and many surgeons ask for one. Anyone with a health condition benefits from a comprehensive biological dental exam.

3 Medicines and supplements

Some common ones need to be paused before surgery. Ask, don't guess.

- ☐ **Bring every bottle**, or a photo of each label, to your pre-op visit: prescriptions, over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, herbs, and supplements.
- ☐ **Ask:** "Which of my medicines and supplements should I stop, and when?" Anesthesiologists often advise stopping herbal supplements about 2 weeks before surgery. [QUESTION TO ASK](#)
- ☐ **Know the bleeding risks:** fish oil, vitamin E, turmeric, garlic, and ginkgo can affect bleeding and are often paused. So are blood thinners and some pain relievers, only as your doctor directs.
- ☐ **Taking a GLP-1 medicine** (like Ozempic, Wegovy, Mounjaro, or Zepbound)? Tell your surgical and anesthesia team early. Newer guidance lets most people keep taking it, with a plan to keep anesthesia safe (American Society of Anesthesiologists). [QUESTION TO ASK](#)
- ☐ **Ask when to restart** each medicine and supplement after surgery. [QUESTION TO ASK](#)

4 Questions for your surgical team

Write your answers down, or record the visit.

- ☐ "Do you follow an Enhanced Recovery After Surgery (ERAS) plan, and what does that mean for me?" [QUESTION TO ASK](#)
- ☐ "What's my pain plan? Can it start with non-opioid options?" [QUESTION TO ASK](#)
- ☐ "What's my plan to prevent blood clots?" [QUESTION TO ASK](#)
- ☐ "When can I shower, drive, lift, climb stairs, and go back to work?" [QUESTION TO ASK](#)
- ☐ "When can I start recovery therapies like compression, lymphatic massage, red light, or a sauna?" [QUESTION TO ASK](#)
- ☐ "Which signs mean I should call you, and which mean I should go to the ER?" [QUESTION TO ASK](#)

5 Get your home ready

Set up your recovery space before surgery day.

- ☐ **Stock easy, protein-rich meals:** soups, broths, cooked vegetables, eggs, yogurt, and fruit.

- ☐ **Put everyday things within reach** at waist height: medicines, water, chargers, glasses, and the TV remote.
- ☐ **Make it safe to walk:** clear rugs and cords, and add night lights for trips to the bathroom.
- ☐ **Gather comfort gear:** extra pillows, ice packs, loose clothes that open in front, and a shower chair or grabber if your surgeon suggests one.
- ☐ **Fill your prescriptions before surgery** if your surgeon allows, so you don't have to stop on the way home.
- ☐ **Plan for kids and pets** so you can rest.

6

Surgery day

Follow your instructions exactly, and bring a little comfort.

- ☐ **Follow your eating and drinking instructions exactly.** They protect you during anesthesia.
- ☐ **Bring:** your ID, insurance card, medicine list, any CPAP machine, and a phone charger. Leave jewelry and valuables at home.
- ☐ **Bring headphones and calming music.** In a review of 73 trials, music before and after surgery reduced pain and anxiety and lowered the need for pain medicine (The Lancet, 2015). **PROMISING**
- ☐ **Breathe slowly when you feel nervous:** in through your nose, and a long, slow breath out.

7

The first two weeks

Rest, move gently, and know the warning signs.

Call 911 for

chest pain, sudden shortness of breath, coughing up blood, or fainting. Call your surgeon right away for a fever, spreading redness, swelling, pus or a bad smell from your incision, calf pain or swelling in one leg, or pain that keeps getting worse.

- ☐ **Keep the warning signs where you can see them,** on the fridge or in your phone, along with your surgeon's after-hours number.
- ☐ **Walk early and often,** even a few minutes every hour you're awake, as your team allows. Moving helps your lungs, gut, and circulation, and it's a core part of ERAS.
- ☐ **Do your breathing exercises.** If you're given a breathing device (an incentive spirometer), use it as directed.
- ☐ **Follow your pain plan.** Take pain medicine as directed, use ice and positioning, and store any opioids safely. Bring leftovers to a pharmacy drop box or a take-back day.

- ☐ **Keep your gut moving:** water, fiber, and gentle walks. Pain medicines often cause constipation, so ask what to use if it happens. [QUESTION TO ASK](#)
- ☐ **Follow your blood clot plan:** compression stockings, medicine, or moving your ankles, exactly as prescribed.
- ☐ **Care for your incision** the way your team showed you, and keep it clean and dry until they say otherwise.
- ☐ **Accept help, and rest.** Sleep as much as your body asks for.

8

Food for healing

Your body is rebuilding. Feed it well.

- ☐ **Protein at every meal and snack:** eggs, fish, chicken, beef, Greek yogurt, cottage cheese, or bone broth.
- ☐ **Eat colorful vegetables and fruit** for vitamin C and other nutrients your skin and tissue use to heal.
- ☐ **Include zinc-rich foods** like beef, eggs, pumpkin seeds, and shellfish.
- ☐ **Drink plenty of water,** and keep alcohol out of the picture while you heal.
- ☐ **Keep blood sugar steady:** skip sugary drinks and snacks, and pair carbs like sweet potatoes or rice with protein.
- ☐ **Support your gut after antibiotics** with fermented foods, and ask before starting a probiotic. Read repair, then rebuild the gut. [QUESTION TO ASK](#)

9

Swelling, lymph, and scars

Gentle support for swelling now, and smart scar care once you've healed.

- ☐ **Wear your compression garment** exactly as your surgeon prescribes, especially after body procedures.
- ☐ **Elevate and ice** as directed to calm swelling.
- ☐ **Once your surgeon clears you,** gentle lymphatic work and compression can help swelling and circulation. They never replace your clot-prevention plan.
- ☐ **Once the incision has fully closed,** ask about silicone gel or silicone sheets, the first choice in international scar care recommendations. [QUESTION TO ASK](#) [PROMISING](#)
- ☐ **Protect new scars from the sun** with clothing or mineral sunscreen for at least the first year, so they don't darken.
- ☐ **Ask when you can start gentle scar massage.** [QUESTION TO ASK](#)

Getting back to life

Healing continues for weeks to months. Go step by step.

- ☐ **Do your physical therapy and home exercises.** They make the biggest difference in getting your strength back.
- ☐ **Build up gradually:** walking, then everyday tasks, then exercise, following your surgeon's timeline.
- ☐ **Don't drive** until your surgeon says you can, and never while taking opioid pain medicine.
- ☐ **Watch your mood.** Feeling low or tired after surgery is common. Tell your doctor if it lasts more than a couple of weeks, and lean on your people. In a crisis, call or text 988.
- ☐ **Wait on saunas, hot tubs, and pools** until your incisions have fully healed and your surgeon says yes.
- ☐ **Keep every follow-up appointment,** even if you feel great.

Your MK protocol

Support before and after, always on your surgeon's timeline.

MK Wellness is a non-medical wellness spa, and we love working alongside surgical teams. With your permission, we'll coordinate with your surgeon's office on timing. Read our full guide, before and after surgery, and our Pre & Post Surgery protocol.

When	What we suggest
The weeks before	Mild hyperbaric oxygen, red light, PEMF, EWOT for fitness, the Sound Lounge to calm pre-surgery nerves, and the infrared sauna for circulation, as your surgeon allows. We stop when your surgeon recommends.
Around surgery day	Rest, not therapies.
After your surgeon clears you	Red light, PEMF, mild hyperbaric oxygen, the lymphatic roller and compression boots for swelling and circulation, and the Sound Lounge for rest. Heat and water wait until incisions have fully healed.

Good to know

Some PEMF devices are FDA-cleared for postoperative pain and swelling, and photobiomodulation (red light) has been studied for tissue repair. Hospital hyperbaric oxygen is an approved treatment for some hard-to-heal wounds; our mild hyperbaric chamber is a gentler wellness option.

- ☐ **Book a free tour or a first visit before surgery,** and we'll build a plan around your date. Call or text (346) 805-8928.

- ☐ **After your surgeon clears you**, come back for recovery support, starting gently.
- ☐ **Share your surgeon's instructions with us**, and share our page for surgeons with your surgeon if they'd like to coordinate.

12 Help and resources

Trusted places to learn more.

Who	Helps with	Contact
American Society of Anesthesiologists	Preparing for anesthesia and surgery, in plain language	madeforthismoment.asahq.org
ERAS Society	What Enhanced Recovery After Surgery means	erassociety.org
American College of Surgeons	Patient guides for common operations	facs.org/for-patients
FDA drug disposal	Safely getting rid of leftover pain medicine	fda.gov/drugdisposal
988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline	Free, confidential support, any time	Call or text 988
Natural Health Network	Holistic practitioners near you	naturalhealthnetwork.org

- ☐ **Exploring regenerative options** before or after orthopedic surgery? We refer our clients to Dr. Tina Hills, D.O., and her practice, PHMX. She now sees clients under our roof a few days a week. Ask us to connect you.

We're in your corner.

Questions about this toolkit, or want help building your MK protocol? Call or text us. We're happy to talk it through.

MK Wellness · 17844 Mound Road, Suite F, Cypress, TX 77433 · Call or text (346) 805-8928 · mkwellness.care/toolkits/surgery-recovery

Important. MK Wellness provides wellness services for comfort and recovery. We do not diagnose or treat any condition, and nothing here replaces your surgical team's instructions. Always get your surgeon's clearance before starting any therapy around your procedure, and contact your surgeon or emergency services right away for any concerning symptoms. This toolkit deliberately includes no doses or protocols. Mention of a person, book, or program is not an endorsement of every claim they make. MK Wellness and PHMX are two separate, independent businesses.