

## Instructions: Preparing for surgery at BC Women's Hospital and after care

These are general instructions to prepare for and recover from surgery. For detailed information specific to your procedure, refer to the aftercare instruction sheets found in the additional resource's sections on our [surgery services page](#). You will also be given instructions following your procedure.

To ensure the best recovery possible after your surgery, please review the information below.

### Weeks before surgery

- Complete all lab tests and attend any consultations suggested by your gynecologist, such as with internal medicine specialists or an anesthesiologist.
- Ensure you have a responsible adult to take you home on the day of surgery and stay with you overnight after surgery. This is necessary to be able to send you home after your procedure and ensure your safety.
- Purchase 4 per cent chlorhexidine antiseptic soap, such as Hibiclens or Dexidin, from your pharmacy if you are having surgery through your abdomen (a laparoscopy or laparotomy). You will need this to wash the surgical site the day before and the morning of surgery.
- To arrange an interpreter for the day of surgery, please call [Translation Services](#) (604-297-8400). This service is available free of charge.

### Two to three days before surgery

You will receive an email communication providing information about your surgery including:

- [Instructions regarding pre-surgical skin wash](#) with 4 per cent chlorhexidine antiseptic soap if you are having surgery through the abdomen
- Arrival time
- Any specific instructions regarding taking your medications before surgery
- Location of the BC Women's Surgical Suites and parking information
- A contact phone number in case you have more questions
- Avoid shaving around the surgical site for at least three days before surgery to reduce the risk of infection
- Remove nail polish
- A request to confirm who will take you home and stay with you on the day of surgery

If you are unwell prior to your surgery, experiencing fever, cough, shortness of breath, runny nose, diarrhea or flu-like symptoms, please call and let us know as soon as possible at 604-875-2278. In this case, your procedure should be rescheduled for when you are healthy.

**Important note:** Medications used for weight loss and to treat diabetes can delay stomach emptying. When having an anesthetic, it is important to have an empty stomach prior to surgery to prevent a serious complication called aspiration. If you are taking semaglutide (Ozempic or Wegovy) or another GLP1 agonist drug, please review these important instructions regarding specific fasting instructions prior to surgery.

- [GLP1 medication and fasting instructions \(PDF\)](#)
- [GLP1 clear fluid diet guide \(PDF\)](#)
- [GLP1 medication and fasting video \(English, YouTube\)](#)

Translations:

- [GLP1 medication and fasting video \(Français, YouTube\)](#)
- [GLP1 medication and fasting video \(Español, YouTube\)](#)
- [GLP1 medication and fasting video \(Mandarin, YouTube\)](#)
- [GLP1 medication and fasting video \(Punjabi, YouTube\)](#)
- [GLP1 medication and fasting video \(Portuguese, YouTube\)](#)

### **Day of surgery**

Review our printable [pre-operative instructions](#) (PDF) for key reminders on the day of surgery, such as:

- Shower or bathe on the day of surgery with 4 percent chlorhexidine skin wash. If you are having laparoscopy, please ensure your navel (belly button) is cleaned
- Leave jewellery and valuables at home. You may bring a cell phone.
- Leave enough time to find parking and arrive on time.
- Bring your BC Care Card and one piece of photo ID.
- If you are unwell on the day of surgery, experiencing fever, cough, shortness of breath, runny nose, diarrhea or flu-like symptoms, please do not come to the hospital. Call us at 604-875-2278 and/or your gynecologist so that we can arrange to reschedule your procedure when you are healthy.

### **Care after surgery**

After surgery:

- Clean your hands with soap and water before handling your dressing or incisions
- You can remove dressings after 24 hours
- Remove Steri-Strips after seven days or as recommended by your surgeon
- You may shower 24 hours after surgery by covering dressings with plastic wrap and tape and patting dry as necessary

After having an anesthetic:

- You cannot drive or operate a vehicle for 24 hours
- You should have an adult stay with you overnight
- You should not consume alcohol or use recreational drugs, stimulants or sedatives for 24 hours
- You should not make important decisions for 24 hours

Pain control after surgery:

- Your doctor will review suggestions for pain control depending on the nature of your surgery
- For most patients going home on the same day as surgery, a combination of pain medication is recommended:
  - Acetaminophen 975 - 1000 mg every 6 hours (max 4 gr over 24 hours) plus
  - Naproxen 440 - 500 mg every 12 hours with food
- If you have an allergy or intolerance to one of these options, please discuss alternatives with your doctor
- Some patients may require [additional pain medication \(opioids\)](#) (PDF) and these will be provided as a prescription from your doctor
- Opioid medications can have serious side effects and use should be limited post surgery

Please refer to the specific discharge instructions in the [additional resources section](#). These will also be provided to you upon discharge from the hospital.

**Call your surgeon or go to the nearest emergency department if...**

- You are unable to keep down food or liquids by the morning after surgery
- Your pain is not manageable
- Your pain is worsening after 48 hours
- You have heavy bleeding that is soaking more than one pad per hour for 3 hours
- You have fever greater than 38°C (101°F)