



## **A GUIDE TO ENHANCING YOUR RECOVERY AFTER SPINAL SURGERY**

This pamphlet is part of the Enhanced Recovery After Surgery (ERAS) program at MGH. ERAS is a standard practice for all surgical patients in the Mass General Brigham System and affiliated hospitals.

The included information is designed to help you understand and prepare for your spinal surgery. Please review and ask any questions of your surgical team prior to the surgery.

ERAS is designed to keep you actively involved in your recovery prior to and after your surgery, with the overall goal for you to have a better surgical experience and get back to normal as soon as possible.

Each stage of this program is tailored to minimize your pain, avoid complications, allow for earlier resumption of food and activity, improve your recovery after surgery, and reduce the number of days you need to stay in the hospital.

Together, with your help, we can achieve these goals!

## WEEKS BEFORE SURGERY

- Continue or consider starting a daily **relaxation and stress management practice**, which is known to boost the body's immunity and aid in recovery. This may include exercise, meditation, yoga, and others.
- Eat a mixed healthy diet.
- It is strongly suggested that you **stop smoking completely** at least 3 weeks before your surgery. This will reduce the chances of lung complications during and after surgery and improve your recovery. If you would like more information on how to quit smoking, speak to your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist.
- **Plan ahead.** Arrange for someone to accompany you at the time of admission and at the time of discharge. Make prior preparations at home for your arrival after surgery. Make sure there is enough food and supplies. You should be able to walk and eat and care for yourself, but you may need some extra assistance initially from family or friends, especially to avoid strenuous tasks like laundry, cleaning, and grocery shopping immediately after your surgery.

## 7 DAYS BEFORE SURGERY

- **Inform your surgeon** if you take any NSAIDs (ibuprofen, Advil, Motrin, naproxen, Celebrex), Aspirin, Xarelto, Coumadin, Plavix, Eliquis, or any other anticoagulants or blood thinners as these medications may need to be stopped or adjusted prior to surgery.
- **Stop** Vitamin E supplements.
- **Stop** all herbal supplements, especially krill, garlic, ginkgo, and fish oil.

## 3 DAYS BEFORE SURGERY

- **Stay hydrated.** In the 72 hours prior to surgery, make sure you hydrate frequently with water, Gatorade, Powerade, Pedialyte, ClearFast, or other clear liquids.

## 1 DAY BEFORE SURGERY

- **Avoid** consumption of alcohol at least 24 hours before surgery.
- Continue to eat a healthy diet.
- OK to eat breakfast, lunch, and dinner.
- Make sure that you are well-hydrated:
  - ➔ Drink 20-24 ounces of a pre-op carbohydrate beverage **before you go to bed**.  
Examples: Gatorade, Powerade, Pedialyte, ClearFast.

### After 10pm:

- **DO NOT EAT solid foods.**

CONTINUE	STOP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ water</li><li>➤ juices (clear and without pulp) <u>examples:</u> apple juice, cranberry juice, grape juice</li><li>➤ pre-op carbohydrate beverages <u>examples:</u> Gatorade, Powerade, Pedialyte, ClearFast,</li><li>➤ clear soft drinks (i.e. ginger ale)</li><li>➤ gelatin (Jell-O)</li><li>➤ black tea (no milk/cream)</li><li>➤ black coffee (no milk/cream)</li><li>➤ frozen clear liquids, such as popsicles</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ all solid foods</li><li>➤ chewing gum</li><li>➤ candy</li><li>➤ yogurt</li><li>➤ cream</li><li>➤ dairy-based drinks / smoothies</li><li>➤ milk</li><li>➤ soy milk</li><li>➤ nut milk, such as almond milk</li><li>➤ orange juice</li></ul>

## DAY OF SURGERY

- You may have clear liquids (see table on prior page) up to 3 hours before surgery.
- Take any permitted medications with 1-2 sips of water.
- If you are using any of these, bring them to the hospital:
  - ➔ inhalers or eye drops
  - ➔ your CPAP machine, mask, hoses

### **4 Hours Before Surgery Start**

- Drink 20-24 ounces of pre-op carbohydrate beverage  
Examples: Gatorade, Powerade, Pedialyte, ClearFast.
- **DO NOT drink anything 3 hours before surgery start**

### **3 Hours Before Surgery Start**

- **STOP DRINKING COMPLETELY**: Do not have anything to drink at all or your surgery will be cancelled.
- If you have forgotten to drink clear liquids, that is OK. Do not drink anything at this time – we will give you clear liquids through an IV when you arrive at the hospital.
  - ➔ **If you have diabetes** and your blood sugar is low or you start to feel symptoms of low blood sugar, drink a clear liquid with sugar, such as apple juice, grape juice or regular soda. If this does not help, drink or eat any liquid or fluid that will raise your blood sugar.
  - ➔ **It is better to delay your surgery than to ignore a low blood sugar.**

## AFTER SURGERY

Following your spinal surgery, you will go to the Post-Operative Recovery Unit (PACU).

- The goal is for early postoperative mobilization within the first few hours on arrival to the PACU.
- Your pain will be managed in a stepwise approach starting with acetaminophen, anti-inflammatory medications, lidocaine patches, as well as heat/ ice packs. We will continue to monitor your pain and treat appropriately with muscle relaxants and/or a narcotic pain medication as needed for breakthrough pain.
- We encourage early mobility in the PACU with the nursing and physical therapy teams.
- Once discharged home, we encourage you to ambulate as tolerated. Please follow postoperative spinal precautions as directed by your surgical team (no bending, twisting or lifting > 5-10 lbs).
- Your surgeon's office will clear you for outpatient physical therapy when appropriate.