

# The Ultimate Post-Surgery Nutrition Guide





## *The foods that will help you regain your strength, promote healing and recover quicker from surgery*

Surgery is a common event as we age. In your lifetime, you will most likely go in for surgery or take care of someone recovering from surgery. There are over 48 million surgical procedures done every year and 72% of all surgeries are experienced by those over the age of 45.

It could be a fall, a car accident, a new health condition or a chronic illness that leads to a trip to the operating room. Hip replacements, cataract surgery, fracture repair, cancer operations, biopsies, heart surgery and back operations are the most common types of surgery.

Every type of surgery, even planned and elective surgeries, are a source of trauma to one's body.

After surgery you or a loved one may experience a higher risk of:

- Infection
- Pneumonia
- Falls
- Decreased mobility
- Weight loss or gain
- Loss of energy and motivation

But don't get scared! Your surgery is meant to improve your quality of life. There are a few key things you can do to have a smooth transition home from the hospital and one of the most important things to focus on while healing from surgery is nutrition.

There are certain foods that will provide your body with the energy and nutrition it needs to fight off infections, accelerate healing, increase your strength and maintain your nutrient stores.

# Most Healing Foods to Eat After Surgery

## Berries

Antioxidants are a powerhouse of nutrition that help the body repair damage. Berries are also an excellent source of vitamin C, which research shows is helpful in rebuilding collagen and soft tissue, meaning your incision site will heal quicker. Perfect for after surgery!

You can find high levels of antioxidants in:

Grapes



Pomegranates

Blueberries

Raspberries

Strawberries

Goji berries

Blackberrie



## Vegetables

The vitamins and minerals found in vegetables are some of the most important nutrients in your healing diet. Including these veggies in your day adds in healthy sources of carbohydrates which help to battle the fatigue you feel coming home from the hospital.

Carbohydrates provide your brain with energy and stops muscle from breaking down. Your body will also get a boost of vitamin A and C.

Another great benefit is that the fiber in a diet high in vegetables reduces constipation, which is a common side effect of pain medication and decreased mobility.

Eat these vegetables as a snack or part of a meal:

Carrots



Sweet bell peppers



Broccoli



Cauliflower



Cabbage



Brussel sprouts



Sweet potatoes



Potatoes



Leafy greens are not as fun to talk about as colorful berries and yummy fats. But they are vitally important! A hearty serving of green on your plate (or in your smoothie) gives you a dose of vitamin A, C, and E, as well as vitamin K, which is essential for blood clotting.

You will also be absorbing the B-complex vitamins, which help with energy levels. Don't forget fiber, iron, magnesium, potassium and calcium. Greens are like a multivitamin!

Try adding in:

Kale

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Spinach

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Swiss chard

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Bok choy

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Mustard greens

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Romaine lettuce

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## Healthy Fats (nuts, oils, fish)

Remember, healthy fat is your friend. Especially following surgery, healthy fats can help your body to absorb all those yummy vitamins you are getting from your fruits and veggies.

Fats provide you with a long lasting source of energy. Many types of fats and nuts are high in vitamin E, particularly almonds. Vitamin E helps wounds heal faster and reduce the appearance of scars.

Fat is essential for strengthening your immune system and decreasing your chance of infection. Healthy fats to include:

Olive oil

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Avocados

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Coconut oil

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Nuts

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Seeds

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Dark Leafy Greens

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## Meat or Other Alternatives

As you age, it is important eat adequate amounts of protein. Following surgery, your body needs a high amount of protein and iron.

Your muscles have been potentially damaged, moved and manipulated during the surgical procedure and now needs to repair those muscles.

Amino acids in the protein helps with the repair by regenerating tissue and speeding wound healing. Iron will help you regain your energy levels more quickly as iron creates new blood cells.

Stock up on iron and protein through foods like:

### Poultry

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### Seafood

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### Beans and lentils

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## Eggs

Nature has provided us with an ideal healing food neatly packed in a shell. Eggs are a traditional first meal to serve to invalids and recovering individuals and with good reason.



One egg provides you with:

- 6 Grams of protein
- Vitamins A, E and K
- B complex vitamins (including B12)
- Riboflavin
- Folic acid
- Calcium
- Zinc
- Iron

All those nutrients we have already discussed as being vital for a quick recovery. The best part is that eggs are easy to serve and prepare.

## Probiotics

Probiotics are the happy, healthy bacteria that your body needs to digest food, provide mental balance and fight off all the germs and infections you are prone to after a hospital stay or procedure.

Some of the most common forms of probiotic rich foods are:

### Yogurt

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### Kefir

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### Sauerkraut

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### Kimchi

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Surgery can be rough on your system. Anesthetics, antibiotics and painkillers upset the delicate balance in your gut leaving you with digestive upsets, constipation and nausea. A healthy dose of probiotics can help to regulate your system.

## Brightly Colored Fruits

Who says that healing foods are boring? After surgery, it is even more important to eat all the colors of the rainbow. Pile a bowl full of the brightest colored fruits and veggies and get a good dose of vitamin A, C, carbohydrates, fiber, antioxidants and the nutritious calories your body needs to bounce back.

Fiber is essential following surgery to avoid the discomfort of constipation and fruits provide that fiber with a dose of color, vitamins and energy boosting carbs.

## Whole Grains

Eating plenty of whole grains after surgery will provide your body with the carbohydrates your brain needs for energy and stop your muscles from breaking down. Whole grains also give you another dose of fiber.

You are going to feel tired and worn out following your surgery and the right kind of carbs will bring your energy levels up.

Round your plate out with:

Whole wheat or  
rye sourdough breads

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Steel cut oats

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Quinoa

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Wild rice

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The bulk of your vitamins and minerals will be coming from your healthy fats, veggies, fruit, and proteins. But carbohydrates are an important part of the healing puzzle.

## Water

The easiest and most overlooked thing we need after surgery is water. Don't forget your body is made up of 55-65 percent water.

Dehydration is common and maintaining adequate levels of hydration will help you recover quicker. Depending on the type of surgery you have and the medications you are on, your requirements for fluid may be higher than usual.

If drinking plain water is unappealing you can try:

Flavoring your water  
with lime or lemon

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Drinking coconut water

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Eating high water  
content foods like soup

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Preparing a smoothie  
with extra fluid

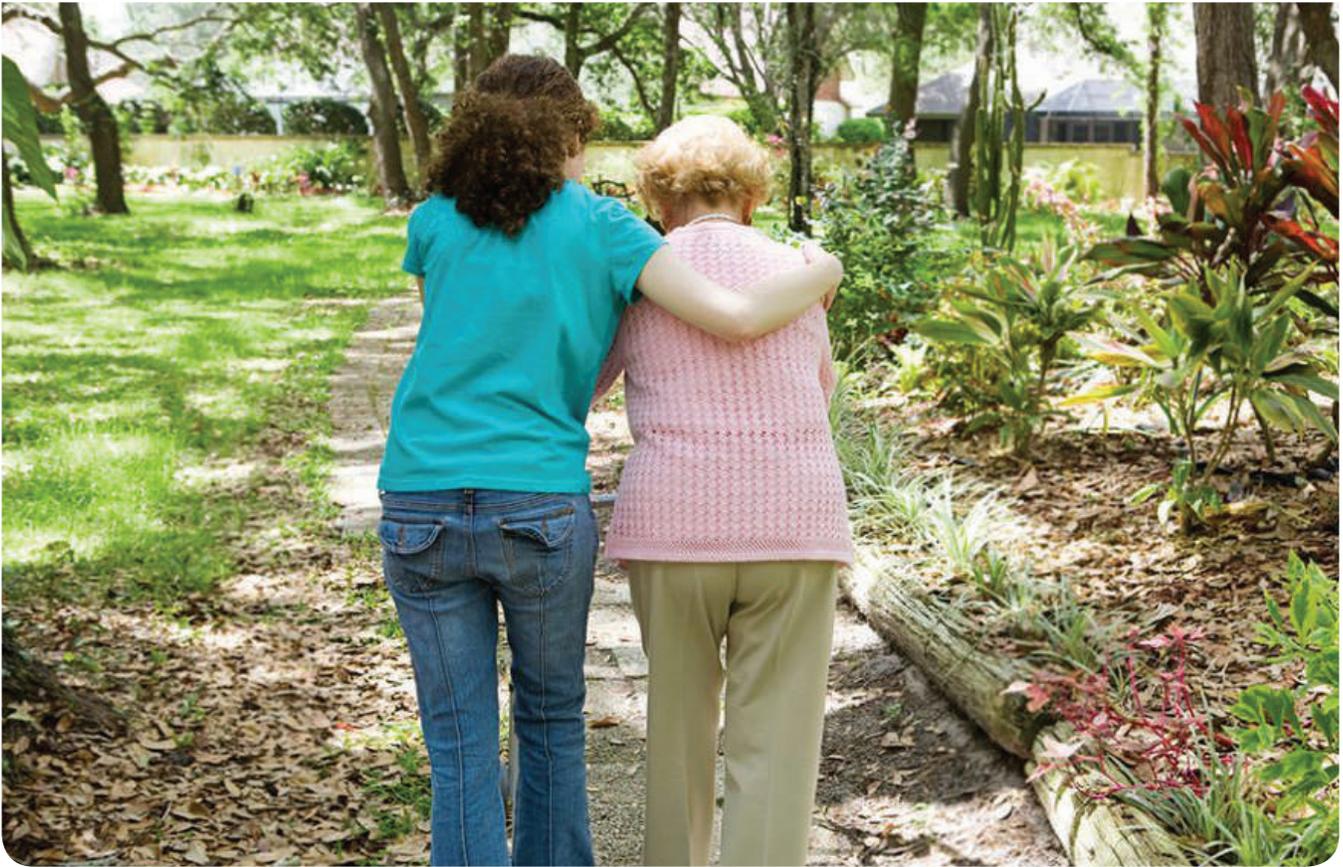
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Drinking herbal teas  
(either hot or cold)

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## We Are Here to Help You When You Need Us

If you or a loved one are preparing for a surgery or operation, Home Care Assistance's Hospital to Home program is for you. Our caregivers are trained specifically in post-surgery care and can help relieve the burden on you, your family and/or your loved ones.

Post-discharge follow-ups by a professional caregiver or home health aide allows for reinforcement of education, monitoring symptoms and assessing progress or adjusting care as needed.

According to the American Nurses Association, a home visit from a professional caregiver within three days of hospital discharge is not only the most effective way to reduce readmission, but it has also shown to reduce returns to the hospital by 17% in those 65 and older.

Give us a call today at 1-866-454-8346 to learn more about our specialized Hospital to Home Care programs.