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ReFresh: Awaiting Surgery

Are You – or Someone Close to You – Waiting for Surgery?

Surgery wait lists are not new in BC; however, the waiting period has lengthened considerably due to staffing and facility shortages and other sector issues.

As you can imagine, there are many different types of surgeries, and some are more urgent in nature than others. Additionally, depending on the operation, waitlists may be longer due to factors that can include overburdened specialists and operating room availability.

Regardless, for someone waiting for surgery, this can be a difficult time that requires super-strength, patience, and grit! The individual may be off work, restricted from doing things they enjoy, experiencing chronic pain and/or other uncomfortable symptoms, weary from coping, and even experiencing depression.

What To Do While You Wait

It is understandable that an individual can become quite lethargic at home while awaiting surgery. However, when your surgery day finally arrives, you want to be healthy and ready so that:

- 1) Your surgery does not get cancelled because you are sick, or otherwise unwell
- 2) Your condition does not worsen and create other complications, causing further delays or longer recovery times
- 3) Surgery outcomes are optimized
- 4) Recovery is faster

Here are tips for what you can do while awaiting surgery (*consider these tips based on the type of health condition and surgery planned – always first follow your physician's instructions regarding self-care during your pre-surgery wait times*):

1. Avoid groups of people: *we should be good at this now!* Avoid crowds, stay away from people who are sick, and practice social distancing (six feet of space between people).
2. Wash your hands frequently, and always wash your hands after you use the bathroom, blow your nose, or after covering a cough or sneeze.
3. Stay hydrated. Drinking water is important for maintaining hydration of tissues throughout your body and helping your major organs function efficiently.
4. Eat well. Good nutrition is important for maintaining health. Eat high-protein, low-carbohydrate foods, and plenty of fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables. This anti-inflammatory diet will help to ensure your body is prepared for surgery, and will also support your immune system during heightened risk for any illness.
5. Keep doing the preoperative exercises that have been prescribed, particularly for hip or knee replacements. Continue doing the strengthening exercises consistently while you are waiting for surgery.
6. Move your body. Do an activity that increases deep breathing, which delivers fresh oxygen throughout your body, whether you are walking, standing, or sitting in a chair!
7. Go outside on nice days. A small amount of time spent in the sunshine and breathing fresh air is good for our bodies.
8. Practice stress relief, including meditation, yoga, or deep breathing. These techniques also work when you experience pain. If you smoke, now is a good time to reduce/stop smoking and start implementing new stress-relief strategies.
9. Maintain healthy sleep habits, making sure you get eight hours of sleep. Rest is important for your health and also in preparing you for surgery.
10. Maintain a positive attitude. When preparing for surgery, and recovering from surgery, a positive attitude will help you in many ways.

For those of you who know someone waiting for heart surgery, here is a [good article from the UK](#) that quotes Canadian research.

To look up surgical wait times in BC, check out the [BC Surgery Wait Times Website](#) where you can look up wait times based on procedure or specialist.

And if there is a surgery pending for you, a family member, or a friend, we wish you all good health and a speedy recovery.

Sources:

<https://www.capitaldaily.ca/news/bc-surgery-wait-times-rebalance-private-public>

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<https://vancouver.sun.com/news/local-news/smaller-bureaucracy-more-training-spaces-and-wait-list-legislation-could-solve-b-c-s-health-care-crisis-panel-finds>

<https://www.ssmhealth.com/blogs/ssm-health-matters/april-2020/10-things-to-do-while-waiting-for-elective-surgery>

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Morandini', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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If you would like to contribute or have ideas about what you would like to see in the ReFresh series, we would love to hear from you: contact rochelle@bcpvpa.bc.ca.