

This advice and checklist for plastic surgery preparation and your period of recovery are an essential guide for you to be better prepared and have an easier recovery process.

1. It is vitally important to have a caregiver after a surgery. It could be family member, a friend, or even a professional nurse. You must **have someone with you for the first 1-3 days** (depends on the surgery) after surgery. The person(s) will help you with everyday activities such as preparing meals and feeding, walking you to the rest room, helping with your hygiene, giving you medications and other needed tasks that you may have difficulty with. Having a good and responsible caregiver will allow you to rest and sleep more, save your energy during this recovery period, and have emotional support from another person.
2. You should know that after surgery **you may be irritable, angry, and have low energy**. Even trivial things may upset you. It would be better for you to avoid any guests who are not going to support you and to limit phone conversations.
3. If you have surgery on the face, **don't use any make-up for 2 weeks** after surgery.
4. Try to **reduce your caffeine** intake step-by-step starting 3 weeks before having a surgery. Then totally avoid it as you get into the last week before your procedure. After surgery, keep caffeine out of your daily menu for 2 weeks. Remember, no coffee, tea, or any kind of caffeine-containing soda!
5. You have to **stop smoking before surgery**. These bad habit must be stopped for a minimum of 3-4 weeks before surgery and at least 3 weeks during the post-operative period. Avoiding this rule may cause slow healing, skin death, terrible scars, respiratory complications and a poor reaction from the anesthesia.
6. Swelling is the most common consequence of surgery, so it is recommended to **use ice packs** during the first 2-3 days after surgery if your surgical site is accessible. Put an ice pack to the swollen area every two hours for 20 minutes. You have to ask your caregiver to apply these ice packs while you sleep. Remember, never put an ice pack directly on your skin! First put a thin towel on the swollen area and then place an ice pack.
7. You must **protect your scars from the sun** with sunblock containing zinc oxide or titanium dioxide for the first 6 month after surgery. Don't touch, rub, bump your incision areas and avoid using any skincare products near your incision until I advise you that it is OK. To help your scars mature faster, you will be shown a **scar massage** technique once you are adequately healed. Aloe vera gel and Vitamin E oil are my favorites for this.
8. You **must not go swimming** in a pool, at the beach, nor in a lake or river for 6 weeks after surgery. You should also avoid hot saunas and jacuzzi's for 6 weeks after surgery. Also, when you are taking a shower, try to avoid excessively hot water as this can prolong or worsen swelling.

9. For procedures on your face, you have to **avoid using any kind of acid, astringent, and exfoliant** products until 4 weeks post-operation because they will irritate your vulnerable skin. Don't color or cut your hair and avoid waxing and tweezing facial hair for 3 weeks after your operation.
10. If you need to go out into public, you may wish to hide any residual bruising and swelling. Please **ask our aestheticians for advice on safe postsurgical makeup** (creams, foundations, color correctors), which will help you to hide any skin defects.
11. **Do not push, pull, nor lift anything heavier than 5 pounds** (10 pounds with both hands) for at least 6 weeks after surgery. Exercising and sex activity must be eliminated for 3-6 weeks depending on your type of procedure.
12. **You must not drive a vehicle for the first 7 days** after your surgery, nor while you are taking pain or sedating medications, that may cause sleepiness or impair your vision. If you have a lot of swelling around your eyes (after eyelid and brow surgery), you should also wait until it retreats.
13. Fewer and fewer patients feel nauseous after surgery, but it is still strongly recommended that you select non-spicy, non-chewy food that will not irritate your stomach. You should **drink at least 8 glasses of water**, vegetable juice or protein drinks per day.
14. Help yourself be ready by setting **a table near your bed** with telephone, water, medications, remote controls, and wet napkins to clean your hands without soap. Keep a thermometer and disposable towels close to you.
15. Before the surgery, **prepare your bed** with clean sheets; collect your spare pillows for your elevated position. Many patients prefer to sleep in a "Lazy Boy" type recliner chair after facial procedures and body contouring.
16. Keep your **blinds or curtains closed** to let you get sleep and avoid unwanted sunlight.
17. **Do not use aspirin and ibuprofen for 2 weeks** before surgery as they increase bleeding during surgery and bruising afterwards.
18. If you are taking **pain pills** after surgery, it's important that you **have something to eat** each time before using them. Sometimes, you may not have an appetite, but try to eat a few salt-free crackers and then drink water with your pill.
19. Review with me **all medications, supplements, herbal products, homeopathic drugs**, and any other products that you take during your daily life or are considering taking in the weeks before and after your procedure.
20. It is **normal to be both excited and frightened** before and after your procedure. Wait until 6 weeks post-op for these feelings to fade and for you to have your more usual outlook on life.

**Checklist**

1. \_\_\_ Clean your house -- or have it cleaned.
2. \_\_\_ Shop for recovery food and treats like pudding, Jell-O, frozen dinners, low sodium soups; or cook your own meals and freeze them.
3. \_\_\_ Take out the trash, so you don't have to worry about it later.
4. \_\_\_ Have all of your laundry taken care of.
5. \_\_\_ Make a "Honey Do" list (bills, thermostat settings, errands, reminders).
6. \_\_\_ Purchase all of your medications beforehand.
7. \_\_\_ Purchase a thermometer if you don't have one.
8. \_\_\_ Have lots of movies, books, magazines or videogames on hand, and load your iPod.
9. \_\_\_ A laptop is a great thing to have handy during recovery
10. \_\_\_ If you have children consider having your parents or in-laws watch them the first few days.
11. \_\_\_ Have someone watch your pets during your recovery.
12. \_\_\_ Have a pail at your bedside and on the ride home -- essential. Make sure it has a lid, you don't want to stare at it or smell it afterwards. A large coffee can makes a good pail.
13. \_\_\_ Set your nightstand up beforehand with all of your medications, ample light, bottled water, a few packages of crackers, remote control (with new batteries) & the phone (fully charged).
14. \_\_\_ Have extra blankets on hand when you get home because anesthesia can give you the chills after surgery.
15. \_\_\_ Buy ice packs, bags of frozen peas, raspberries or blueberries which are good for post-operative icing.
16. \_\_\_ A "go-fer" -- a significant other or an older child will suffice.
17. \_\_\_ Have some crackers or Goldfish to help alleviate nausea -- especially on the way home. Bring a bottle of water to for the ride home. Sipping cool water helps alleviate nausea as well as gets rid of the taste in your mouth if you *do* vomit.
18. \_\_\_ Place anything you may need at hip level so that you have no need to reach up or bend down. This means canned and dry goods in the kitchen and toiletries in the bathroom.
19. \_\_\_ Have your robe and slippers (or several pair of thick socks) nearby.
20. \_\_\_ Have a few comfortable oversized shirts that open from the front on hand, as well as some sweat pants or pajama bottoms.
21. \_\_\_ Have a hand mirror nearby so you don't have to get up.
22. \_\_\_ If you have long hair, a few scrunchies are great to put your hair back with to keep it out of your face, unknotted and out of the way.
23. \_\_\_ Purchase some wetnaps and make-up removal towelettes so you can freshen up without having to get out of your bed or chair. Baby wipes are very good for this.

24. \_\_\_ Have a good moisturizer on hand.
25. \_\_\_ A box of Kleenex is great to have on hand.
26. \_\_\_ Make time for yourself *before* your surgery; pour a bath, light some candles, listen to some music -- relax. Try to gather your thoughts and soothe your mind.
27. \_\_\_ The night before surgery, wash with Dial antibacterial or *Hibiclens* soap to help rid your body of its naturally occurring bacteria (*Staph*) on the skin's surface.
28. \_\_\_ Wash your hair the night before surgery -- it may be a long time before you get to do that again.
29. \_\_\_ Remove any fingernail and toenail polish so that they will be able to better determine if you are getting enough oxygen during surgery.
30. \_\_\_ Talk to your spouse about any concerns that you may have, they may have some insights or questions you haven't thought of -- they may be experiencing pre-op anxiety as well.
31. \_\_\_ Have a fully charged camera with an empty chip on hand. Especially if you are considering documenting your procedure.
32. \_\_\_ Have your journal and a few fresh, fully inked pens ready if you are wanting to document your post-operative thoughts in writing. Or if you are like me it is easier to type it into that laptop or speak it into a miniature recorder. Remember fresh batteries.
33. \_\_\_ Just in case the lights go out or you need assistance in the middle of the night, have a flash light on your nightstand.
34. \_\_\_ Have a nightlight or two lighting your way to the restroom for night visits.
35. \_\_\_ And don't even try *not* looking at yourself. I know you may hear not to look at yourself for a week but really -- who is *that* strong-willed? Just remember when you do break down and peek, "What you see is NOT what you get" for about 6-8 weeks.
36. \_\_\_ Last but not least, RELAX. If you are stressed out it can affect your recovery. Try to remember that you will heal, you will be less sore and that you are going to look better! Be patient.