

What to Do — and Not to Do — During Recovery from Plastic Surgery

Congratulations! You've come far enough on your plastic surgery journey to begin preparing for your [post-operative recovery](#). As your surgeon has no doubt told you, the best way to have a quick and easy recovery is to be healthy *before* your surgery. This means no smoking, cut back on alcohol and fatty foods, and taking care of details like paying bills, grocery shopping and arranging transportation in advance. The less you have to worry about after your surgery, the better you'll be able to focus on your own care and healing.

Here are a few more tips to keep in mind as you recover:

- Be sure to follow ALL of your surgeon's post-operative instructions — change dressings, apply ice packs and exercise as directed. If you have questions or are unsure about anything, always call your surgeon. Don't worry that you're being a "bother" — he or she is here to help you.
- Take pain medications as needed — no more, no less. Obviously you don't want to overuse prescription medications, but neither should you try to be "tough" and refuse to take medicine when you're experiencing pain. Doing so only raises your stress level, and thus your blood pressure, which can lead to more bruising and an increased risk of complications. Avoid medications that can interfere with blood clotting, such as aspirin.
- Stay well-hydrated. Drink plenty of clear liquids (water, broth, electrolyte drinks or flavored gelatin) in order to keep your body functioning properly. Some types of tea may help you feel better and reduce swelling, but be sure to avoid caffeine, as this can irritate your system and cause dehydration. Your body also needs extra protein and calcium during healing; eat a healthy diet of non-processed foods rich in nutrients.
- Wear loose, breathable clothing after any type of [body procedure](#), and don't compress the area in attempt to hide evidence of surgery. You may even want to purchase some "healing clothes" that are a size larger than you normally wear.
- Stay out of the sun after [facial surgery](#). Once your doctor approves going outside, apply sunscreen liberally and often. Make sure you don't become overheated, and keep your head elevated above the rest of your body as much as possible, to reduce swelling. You may want to sleep with an extra pillow to keep your head and neck slightly raised.
- Do not push yourself to return to work, social engagements or strenuous exercise too quickly. You will not heal faster, and you risk prolonging your recovery. Your body needs rest and recuperation. You may exercise when — and only when — your surgeon recommends it.
- Do, however, be sure to get as much fresh air and low-impact activity as you can. Doing so will not only help you maintain a positive, healthy mental state, but also reduce the constipation that comes with sitting around doing nothing.
- Don't worry or fret over your appearance (including scarring). Your healing process may not be complete for several weeks, or even months. Final results take time and patience.

Your own actions and mental outlook can definitely affect your recovery from plastic surgery — for good or ill. Talk with your surgeon during your follow-up visit(s) about these and any other concerns or questions you have about how to influence your own recovery. It may seem slow at first, but as long as

you take care of yourself, each day will be a bit better than the last. Before you know it, you'll be ready to enjoy the results you've been dreaming of!