

Prehabilitation Program for Surgery

For patients who will be having surgery

Read this brochure to learn about:

- What is prehabilitation and how it can help
- The UHN Prehabilitation Program and what to expect
- Who can join the UHN Prehabilitation Program

What is prehabilitation?

Prehabilitation is the process of helping you better cope with the stress you may feel before your surgery or treatment. Coping with stress early can help prevent complications after your surgery and improve your overall recovery.

It includes different activities such as exercise, healthy eating, and stress management.



What are the benefits of prehabilitation?

You may need to wait several weeks for your surgery. During this time, many people find that their physical fitness and overall wellbeing gets worse.

Research shows that being healthier physically and mentally before surgery can help improve your recovery after surgery. **Prehabilitation** is a way to improve physical and mental health during the waiting period before surgery.

Prehabilitation can help:

- Reduce complications from surgery
- Reduce the length of hospital stay
- Speed up recovery after surgery

Prehabilitation may include:

- Physical activity and exercise
- Healthy eating and additional nutrition
- Managing stress and strategies to help you keep up with your prehabilitation

Physical Activity and Exercise

Physical activity can improve your health and lower your risk of disease. Physical activity can include walking to the store, cleaning, gardening or walking up the stairs. Exercise is just one type of physical activity.

Exercise is a type of physical activity that you do regularly to improve your fitness. Adding regular exercise to daily physical activity is the best way to improve your health.

For most adults, it is recommended that you do 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per week. You can reach this goal in different ways:

- Aerobic (cardiovascular) exercise 3 to 5 days per week, 20 to 60 minutes per day. Examples of aerobic exercise are walking, cycling or swimming.

- Resistance (weight training) exercises 2 to 3 days per week, 1 to 3 sets of 8 to 15 repetitions per exercise.

Spending some time each day to stretch will help maintain or improve your flexibility. Flexibility can help with many daily activities, such as bending over to tie your shoe or reaching for something. Hold the stretch to the point of tension (stop if it becomes painful) for 10 to 30 seconds per muscle.

Healthy Eating and Additional Nutrition

Healthy nutrition is important for your overall wellbeing. Good nutrition can help lower your risk for complications related to your surgery.

Canada's Food Guide provides reliable information on nutrition needs for most people, including those who are going to have surgery. The Food Guide recommends that you:

- Eat vegetables, fruit, whole grains, and protein foods regularly. Choose protein foods that come from plants more often, such as beans, peas, and lentils.
- Avoid foods with mostly saturated fats. Instead, eat foods that contain mostly unsaturated fat.
- Make water your drink of choice.
- Avoid eating processed or prepared foods and drinks that have too much sodium (salt), free sugars, or saturated fat.
- Use food labels. The information on food packages can help you make informed food choices.
- Cook more often. Planning and preparing your own food can help you develop healthy eating habits.

In some cases, your prehabilitation team may recommend that you take additional nutrients, like protein or total calories. They will help determine the right supplement for you.

Managing Stress and Keeping Up with Your Prehabilitation

Many people face a lot of stress after a diagnosis and before a surgery. This stress may affect your health before surgery and can increase your risk for health problems after surgery or a poor recovery.

There are many ways you can reduce stress. You may find that using one or more methods may help, such as:

- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Meditation
- Deep breathing
- Guided visualization

The stress of having surgery may also make it hard to participate in prehabilitation. Prehabilitation includes learning ways to help you stick with your prehabilitation program and new health behaviours, like exercise, nutrition, and stress management. These strategies could include:

- Setting goals
- Scheduling prehabilitation activities, like exercise
- Involving a partner
- Planning for challenges that may occur and how to overcome them

What is the UHN Prehabilitation Program?

The UHN Prehabilitation Program provides exercise, healthy nutrition, and stress management support before your surgery. In some cases, it may also include smoking cessation programs or involving other health care providers in your care.

The Prehabilitation Program team will work with you before your surgery to:

- Review your overall health and see if prehabilitation is right for you
- Help you learn about the benefits of exercise and how to exercise safely
- Test your fitness and explain what it means

- Provide an exercise plan, with the help of an exercise professional (such as a kinesiologist)
- Track how you are doing as you go through your exercise plan
- Help you learn how to achieve a healthy, balanced diet
- Review your food choices and nutritional needs and help you improve your nutrition
- Provide nutrition support, with the guidance of a dietitian
- Help you learn strategies and support to help reduce stress, with the guidance of a psychologist
- Help you maintain health behaviours like exercise and making healthy eating choices

Who can join the program?

The Prehabilitation Program is for people:

- who will be having surgery
- whose health care provider thinks they might need prehabilitation.

Talk to your doctor or other members of your health care team to learn more about the program. They can refer you to the Prehabilitation Program if they think you might be eligible.

Who is part of the Prehabilitation Program's health care team?

Your health care team will include:

- doctors
- psychologists
- kinesiologists
- other health care providers as needed
- dietitians

All of the staff specialize in helping patients who will be having surgery.

Where can I get more information?

If you have any questions or would like more information:

- Contact the Prehabilitation Program at:
 - Email: prehabilitation@uhn.ca
 - Phone: 416 340 4645
 - Fax: 416 340 5363
 - Visit our website at www.uhn.ca/prehab

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