

Comprehensive Prehabilitation Surgical Plan

Preparing Your Body and Mind for Surgery

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Comprehensive Prehab Surgical Plan

 **Prehabilitation (or “prehab”) is like training before surgery — giving your body and mind the best chance for smoother recovery, fewer complications, and stronger long-term health.**

A well-rounded prehab plan usually includes five key pillars: physical preparation, nutrition, mental well-being, lifestyle adjustments, and care coordination.

Physical Preparation

- **Exercise & Movement:** Tailored program with light aerobic activity (like walking or cycling), resistance training, and flexibility exercises to build strength and endurance.
 - **Breathing Exercises:** Practices like diaphragmatic breathing to strengthen lungs and support better oxygenation after surgery.
 - **Functional Training:** Movements that prepare for daily activities (sitting, standing, reaching) to make recovery smoother.
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Nutrition & Supplement Support

- **Balanced Eating:** Focus on protein, whole grains, colorful fruits/vegetables, and healthy fats.
 - **Hydration:** Staying well-hydrated improves circulation and wound healing.
 - **Micronutrient Support:** Adequate vitamins and minerals (vitamin D, C, zinc, iron, magnesium) to support immune and tissue repair.
 - **Supplement Guidance:** Under medical advice, some patients benefit from omega-3s, probiotics, or specialized supplements. Always confirm with your surgeon about timing (some may need to be stopped before surgery).
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Mental & Emotional Readiness

- **Anxiety Management:** Techniques like guided imagery, meditation, and relaxation exercises to reduce pre-op stress and post-op pain.
 - **Counseling:** Addressing fears, guilt, or worries, especially with cancer-related surgeries.
 - **Sleep Optimization:** Prioritizing restful, consistent sleep to support healing and immune function.
 - **Support Networks:** Connecting with loved ones, support groups, or peer mentors who have gone through similar experiences.
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Lifestyle & Home Adjustments

- Smoking & Alcohol: Reducing or eliminating these improves surgical outcomes and healing.
 - Sleep Hygiene: Creating a bedtime routine and preparing for restful nights.
 - Home Prep: Setting up a recovery area, clearing walkways, stocking groceries, and arranging help for childcare, pets, or chores.
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Care Coordination & Education

- Medical Optimization: Managing health conditions (diabetes, blood pressure, anemia, etc.) before surgery.
 - Medication Review: Adjusting prescriptions and supplements that may interfere with surgery or healing.
 - Education: Understanding the procedure, what to expect in the hospital, and the recovery timeline.
 - Goal Setting: Creating a personalized recovery roadmap with realistic milestones.
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Why Prehab Matters

Studies show that patients who participate in comprehensive prehab programs often experience:

- Faster return to normal activities
 - Fewer complications and hospital readmissions
 - Reduced anxiety and stronger coping skills
 - Improved physical strength and energy
 - Greater sense of control and confidence
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 **Bottom line: Prehab isn't just about the surgery — it's about empowering you to step into surgery stronger, calmer, and more prepared for the road to recovery.**

Surgery Countdown Action Plan

 **Whether you have a week or just a day before surgery, these steps can help you feel more prepared and supported.**

If You Have 4–6 WEEKS Before Surgery

Focus on building long-term habits that support healing.

Nutrition & Supplements

- Prioritize protein at every meal (most people don't get enough).
- Fill your plate with colorful fruits and vegetables.
- Limit alcohol, caffeine, and ultra-processed foods.
- Start targeted supplements (discuss with your care team).
- Ask your doctor if any labs should be checked (e.g., albumin, ANC).

Sleep & Rest

- Establish a consistent sleep schedule (7–9 hours).
- Create a calming bedtime routine: stretching, warm shower, reading.
- Avoid caffeine after lunch and screens before bed.

Movement & Strength

- Aim for at least 20–30 minutes of activity per day (walking counts).
- Add resistance training or yoga to build strength and flexibility.
- Focus on muscle groups you'll rely on after surgery.

Stress & Anxiety Relief

- Practice daily stress relief: meditation, guided imagery, deep breathing.
- Try journaling, talking with a friend, or therapy if helpful.
- Focus on gentle consistency, not perfection — space and grace matter.

Medical & Practical Prep

- Track sleep, meals, hydration, movement, and stress for awareness.
- Identify areas where you need help (PT for mobility, PCP for anxiety, etc.).
- Confirm all upcoming labs, follow-up visits, and surgical appointments.
- Begin stocking pantry/freezer with healthy, easy-to-reheat meals.

If You Have ONE WEEK Before Surgery

Focus on building up your body and setting routines.

Nutrition & Supplements

- Eat balanced meals: prioritize quality protein, fiber-rich veggies, whole grains.
- Limit alcohol, caffeine, and ultra-processed foods.
- Ask your surgeon if you should pause or continue supplements

Sleep & Rest

- Aim for 7–9 hours of sleep each night.
- Create your sleep hygiene routine that you will stick to after surgery.
- Try different calming routines: light stretching, warm shower, reading, avoiding electronics, cool/dark room, no caffeine after lunch.

Movement & Strength

- Continue your normal exercise routine.
- If you do not have an exercise routine, aim for daily walks and gentle movement.

Stress Relief

- Create a calming routine you can use before and after surgery: journaling, meditation, or listening to soft music.
- Practice deep breathing, guided imagery, or mindfulness exercises to calm your nervous system.

Early Prep & Planning

- Start stocking your pantry and freezer with easy meals.
- Arrange help for childcare, pets, household chores, and transportation.
- Check what supplies your surgeon recommends (gauze, ice packs, mastectomy pillow, etc.)
- Prepare your home (see below).

If You Have ONE DAY Before Surgery

Focus on comfort, safety, and support for the days right after.

Prepare Your Home

- Set up a recovery space (chair or bed with pillows/support).

- Place essentials within reach: meds, water, phone charger, remote, snacks.
- Clear walkways, remove tripping hazards, and add nightlights if needed.

Stock Up

- Get groceries, easy meals, and plenty of fluids.
- Pick up any prescriptions or supplies.

Enlist Help

- Confirm who will help with meals, laundry, childcare, and transportation.
 - Create a check-in plan with family/friends for daily support.
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Final Checks for Everyone!

- Pack your hospital bag
 - Review your discharge instructions and write down any last questions for your care team.
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Supplements I recommend to patients before and after surgery

I usually recommend at least 2-4 weeks before and after surgery

Except for bromelain which is for 5 days after surgery and curcumin which should be started after surgery

As always, please consult with your healthcare team before starting any supplement

Supplement	Daily Dose	Why
Vitamin A	2000 IU (women), 3000 IU (men)	Supports tissue repair and immune function
B Vitamins	A comprehensive B including 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 9 and 12	Support the overall healing process
Vitamin C	500 mg	Promotes collagen synthesis and reduces oxidative stress
Vitamin D	2000-5000 IU	Supports immune health and bone recovery
Glutamine	0.2 g/kg ideal body weight/day; up to 30g safe	Preserves gut integrity and promotes recovery
Arginine	At least 6 grams/day	Enhances nitric oxide production and wound healing
Protein	20-50 g	Provides amino acids essential for tissue repair and healing
Probiotics	At least 10 billion CFU	Supports gut health and immune function
Zinc	30 mg	Essential for wound healing and immune defense
Omega-3 Fatty Acids	2-4 g	Reduces inflammation and supports cardiovascular health
Curcumin with Bioperine	500 mg	Anti-inflammatory and antioxidant support
Bromelain	500 mg	Reduces swelling and bruising
Creatine	5g (muscle) 10g (cognition)	Support muscle growth and helps cognitive function
Magnesium glycinate	200 mg	Supports muscle relaxation and sleep
Calcium	500 mg	Promote bony health and muscle function

Getting Help After Surgery: Activities to Plan For

 Healing takes energy. Asking for and accepting help lets your body focus on recovery. Here are common tasks where support can make a big difference.

Childcare & Family Support

- School drop-offs, pick-ups, and after-school activities
 - Preparing meals, snacks, and lunchboxes for kids
 - Bathing, lifting, or carrying young children
 - Homework supervision and playtime
 - Emotional support and extra attention for kids adjusting to changes
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Meals & Groceries

- Grocery shopping or scheduling delivery
 - Meal prepping or providing freezer meals
 - Carrying heavy bags and restocking pantry items
 - Cooking daily meals and snacks
 - Helping with hydration reminders
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Household Chores

- Laundry (lifting baskets, folding, putting away clothes)
 - Vacuuming, sweeping, or mopping floors
 - Taking out the trash and recycling
 - Cleaning bathrooms, kitchens, and other spaces
 - Making beds and changing linens
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Pet Care

- Walking dogs or cleaning litter boxes
 - Feeding and refilling water bowls
 - Scheduling and attending vet visits if needed
 - Providing playtime and companionship
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Errands & Appointments

- Driving to and from medical or therapy visits
 - Picking up prescriptions and supplies
 - Running small errands (post office, pharmacy, bank)
 - Helping manage paperwork or scheduling follow-ups
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Emotional & Practical Support

- Keeping company during recovery days
 - Checking in by phone, text, or in person
 - Helping with paperwork, insurance, or bills
 - Offering encouragement, reassurance, and distraction with fun activities (movies, games, conversation)
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 **Tip: Make a “help wish list” before surgery and share it with friends or family. Loved ones are often eager to support but appreciate knowing exactly what you need most.**

Mind & Mood Boosters: Evidence-Based Strategies for Healing & Resilience

Cognitive & Psychological Strategies

- **Cognitive Training (CBT):** Cognitive behavioral techniques can reframe negative thoughts, strengthen coping skills, and reduce anxiety.
 - **Therapeutic Support:** Individual therapy offers space to release guilt, address self-blame, and reinforce the truth that cancer is not your fault.
 - **Peer Connection:** Support groups provide validation, connection, and shared experiences that counter feelings of isolation.
 - **Mindfulness Practice:** Even brief moments of meditation can lower stress hormones and foster calm.
 - **Breathwork:** Deep, slow breathing activates the parasympathetic nervous system, promoting relaxation.
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Lifestyle Practices

- **Physical Activity:** Light activity such as walking or stretching releases endorphins and improves mood.
 - **Restorative Sleep:** Adequate sleep strengthens immunity and restores emotional resilience.
 - **Balanced Nutrition:** Whole, nutrient-rich meals stabilize energy, reduce inflammation, and support emotional well-being.
 - **Gentle Movement:** Yoga or Tai Chi serve as moving meditations, strengthening both body and mind.
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Social & Emotional Support

- **Trusted Relationships:** Strong social bonds buffer stress and enhance healing.
 - **Open Communication:** Honest conversations with family and friends reduce misunderstandings and deepen support.
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Behavioral & Emotional Habits

- **Journaling:** Writing helps process emotions, identify patterns, and reduce mental burden.
 - **Gratitude Practice:** Focusing on small daily joys shifts attention from fear toward appreciation.
 - **Creative Engagement:** Hobbies, laughter, and music provide immediate boosts to mood and resilience.
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Medical & Practical Support

- **Professional Guidance:** Accessing mental health providers, social workers, or financial counselors can ease burdens.
- **Informed Understanding:** Learning about cancer and recovery dispels myths and relieves unnecessary guilt.

- Shared Decision-Making: Collaborative planning reduces fatigue and enhances empowerment.
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Mindset Shifts

- Self-Compassion: Treat yourself with the same kindness and patience you would offer a loved one.
 - Acceptance of Limits: Focus energy on areas you can influence rather than striving for total control.
 - Growth Orientation: Shift perspective from “what caused this” toward “how I can recover and grow.”
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 Consider these practices as an emotional first-aid toolkit. Small, consistent steps can create meaningful change — try one or two at a time and build from there.

Sleep Better, Stress Less: Evidence-Based Strategies for Rest and Recovery

Cognitive Approaches for Sleep

- Cognitive Reframing: Replace thoughts like “I’ll never sleep” with calm, reassuring alternatives to reduce nighttime anxiety.
 - Bed as a Sleep Zone: Reserve the bed for rest and intimacy; avoid using it for work or screens.
 - Sleep Restriction Therapy: Limiting time in bed helps consolidate sleep and strengthen natural sleep drive.
 - Pre-Sleep Relaxation: Incorporate deep breathing, a body scan, or short relaxation exercises before lights out.
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Sleep Hygiene Foundations

- Consistency Counts: Maintain the same bedtime and wake time daily — including weekends.
 - Ideal Environment: Keep the bedroom cool, dark, and quiet.
 - Avoid Late Stimulants: Limit caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol in the hours before bedtime.
 - Screen-Free Hour: Power down electronics at least one hour before bed.
 - Evening Rituals: Stretching, reading, a warm bath, or calming music can cue the body that it’s time for sleep.
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Supporting Circadian Rhythm

- Morning Light Exposure: Aim for 10–20 minutes of sunlight within the first hour of waking.
 - Evening Wind-Down: Use blackout curtains, eye masks, or dim lighting to promote melatonin release.
 - Routine Matters: Keep a structured schedule, even during hospital stays or recovery periods.
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Relaxation Techniques

- Mindfulness: Practice present-moment awareness to quiet racing thoughts.
 - Progressive Muscle Relaxation: Tense and release muscle groups to release body tension.
 - Breathing Exercises: Methods like 4-7-8 breathing support relaxation and sleep onset.
 - Yoga Nidra: Guided meditative practices promote deep relaxation and restfulness.
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Nutrition for Better Sleep

- Balanced Diet: Emphasize high-fiber, nutrient-dense meals and limit processed foods.
- Key Minerals: Magnesium, potassium, and calcium can support healthy sleep patterns.
- Tryptophan-Rich Foods: Turkey, dairy, seeds, and nuts may help with melatonin production.

- Avoid Heavy Meals Late: Large, spicy, or fatty meals close to bedtime can disrupt sleep.
 - Reduce Evening Stimulants: Limit caffeine and alcohol intake, especially in the afternoon and evening.
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Hospital Sleep Strategies

- Noise Reduction: Use earplugs or noise-canceling headphones.
 - Eye Protection: An eye mask can help block light in busy environments.
 - Comfort Items: Bring personal items such as a blanket, pillow, or calming scent.
 - White Noise: Apps or machines with soothing sounds mask disruptive hospital noises.
 - Advocate for Rest: Request clustered care, pain management, or mild sleep aids when appropriate.
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Mindset Shifts

- Sleep as Therapy: Recognize that rest is as essential to healing as medication and nutrition.
 - Progress in Small Steps: Even modest improvements in sleep time or quality are meaningful.
 - Prioritize Rest: Treat sleep as a vital prescription for recovery.
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 **Think of these as components of a personalized “Sleep Toolkit.” Try one or two strategies at a time, observe the effects, and gradually build a routine that supports deep rest and resilience.**

Pain Relief Playbook: A Multimodal Approach

Smart Medication Use

- Non-Opioid Options: Medications such as acetaminophen, ibuprofen, or celecoxib can reduce pain and inflammation effectively.
 - Opioid Caution: Opioids may help short-term but can cause nausea, constipation, or dependence — use only when necessary and under close supervision.
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Mind-Body Interventions

- Guided Imagery: Visualizing the body's healing process reduces stress and helps decrease perceived pain.
 - Aromatherapy: Lavender may promote relaxation, while peppermint can ease nausea and improve alertness.
 - Mindfulness & Meditation: Regular practice enhances pain control and emotional resilience.
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Breathwork for Pain Control

- Diaphragmatic Breathing: Deep abdominal breathing lowers stress hormones and eases discomfort.
 - Paced Breathing: Slow, steady breathing improves pain tolerance.
 - 4-7-8 Technique: A structured breathing cycle that promotes relaxation and natural pain relief.
 - Box Breathing: Equal cycles of inhale, hold, exhale, hold — balancing both body and mind.
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Sleep as a Healing Tool

- Good Sleep Hygiene: Keep your bedroom cool, dark, and screen-free.
 - Bedtime Relaxation: Calming music, meditation, or breathing exercises can support sleep onset.
 - Consistent Schedule: A stable routine enhances recovery and lowers pain sensitivity.
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Cognitive Reframing (CBT-Based)

- Thought Shifts: Replace thoughts like *“This pain will never end”* with *“This is temporary, and I have tools to manage it.”*
 - Gentle Activity: Light movement helps prevent stiffness, promotes circulation, and aids recovery.
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Calming the Nervous System

- Relaxation Response: Mindfulness, visualization, and breathwork reduce surgical stress and perceived pain.
 - Pre-Operative Preparation: Lowering stress before surgery improves pain tolerance and may reduce medication needs afterward.
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Identifying Pain Types

- Muscle Pain: Often responds to NSAIDs, acetaminophen, and occasionally short-term opioid use.
 - Nerve Pain: May benefit from medications such as gabapentin or certain antidepressants, as well as TENS therapy, physical therapy, or CBT strategies.
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Nutrition & Natural Adjuncts

- Turmeric (Curcumin): Anti-inflammatory support.
 - Omega-3 Fatty Acids: Reduce inflammation and aid tissue healing.
 - Magnesium: May decrease pain and reduce opioid requirements.
 - Vitamin C: Supports nerve protection and reduces risk of chronic pain.
 - Bromelain: Enzyme from pineapple with anti-swelling effects.
 - Ginger: Natural anti-inflammatory properties.
 - Green Tea: Provides antioxidants and supports circulation.
 - Capsaicin Cream: Topical relief by desensitizing pain receptors.
 - Honey: Natural anti-inflammatory with wound-healing support.
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Movement & Rehabilitation

- Gentle Activity: Walking or stretching helps maintain flexibility and reduce stiffness.
 - Physical Therapy: Structured exercises rebuild strength, improve mobility, and reduce long-term pain.
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 **Think of these approaches as part of a personalized “pain management toolkit.” You don’t need every strategy — choose the ones that align with your body, preferences, and stage of recovery.**

High-Protein, Easy-to-Prepare Meal Ideas

Smooth and Soft Options

1. Greek Yogurt with Collagen Peptides + Berries
Add a scoop of collagen or whey protein for an extra boost.
 2. Cottage Cheese Bowl with Pineapple or Sliced Peaches
Easy to digest and packed with casein protein.
 3. Protein Smoothie
Blend: protein powder, almond butter, banana, spinach, and almond milk.
 4. Scrambled Eggs with Shredded Cheese
Add soft sautéed spinach or mashed avocado for more nutrients.
 5. Lentil or Split Pea Soup with Bone Broth Base
Soft, protein-rich, and soothing.
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One-Pot or Make-Ahead Meals

6. Shredded Rotisserie Chicken with Mashed Sweet Potato
Drizzle with olive oil or tahini for extra calories and flavor.
 7. Quinoa Bowl with Canned Salmon, Avocado, and Steamed Veggies
High in omega-3s and fiber.
 8. Turkey or Chicken Meatballs (Baked or Pan-Fried)
Serve with mashed cauliflower or soft polenta.
 9. Chickpea or Lentil Curry
Use canned legumes for convenience; serve with rice.
 10. Egg or Tofu Fried Rice
Use pre-cooked brown rice and frozen veggies to speed prep.
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Quick Assembly Meals

11. Tuna Salad Lettuce Wraps or Whole Grain Sandwich
Mix with Greek yogurt or avocado instead of mayo.
12. Egg Salad on Toasted Ezekiel Bread or Soft Wrap
Can also be made with tofu for plant-based version.
13. Smoked Salmon on Whole Grain Crackers with Cream Cheese
Top with cucumber or sprouts.

14. Hummus and Hard-Boiled Egg Plate

Add cherry tomatoes and soft pita for a complete meal.

 **High-Protein Breakfasts Anytime**

15. Oatmeal with Protein Powder, Chia Seeds, and Nut Butter

Make as overnight oats or cook quickly on stovetop.

16. Tofu Scramble with Nutritional Yeast and Mushrooms

Easy, plant-based, and soft on the stomach.

17. Protein Pancakes (using cottage cheese or protein powder)

Top with a spoon of Greek yogurt and fruit.

Freezer-Friendly High-Protein Meals for Recovery

Freezable Soups and Stews

1. Lentil and Vegetable Soup (vegan or with bone broth)
Freeze in portion-size containers.
 2. Turkey or Chicken Chili (or Lentil Chili)
Add beans, tomatoes, and shredded veggies.
 3. Butternut Squash and Red Lentil Stew
Creamy, protein-rich, and warming.
 4. White Bean and Kale Soup
Packed with fiber, iron, and protein.
 5. Chicken and Rice Soup with Peas and Carrots
Mild and easy to digest, great for the early post-op phase.
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Freezer-Friendly Main Dishes

6. Baked Turkey or Chicken Meatballs
Freeze in small packs to reheat with sauce or rice.
 7. Vegetarian Lasagna with Lentils or Tofu Ricotta
Freeze in slices or whole pan.
 8. Stuffed Bell Peppers with Quinoa and Black Beans
Wrap individually in foil before freezing.
 9. Egg Muffins with Veggies and Cheese
High protein and easy to reheat for any meal.
 10. Tempeh or Chicken Enchiladas with Beans and Cheese
Freeze in single or double servings.
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