

A handy guide of what measures can be useful to put in place in the lead up to surgery - collated by patients who have been there themselves.

PREPARING YOURSELF MINDSET FOR POST-OPERATIVE RECOVERY

We recommend that you print off the recovery time sheet in the [iapmd.org/surgery downloads](http://iapmd.org/surgery/downloads) section so you have reasonable expectations about recovery times.

- **You only get one chance to recover**
"Take it easy, even if you are feeling OK. There are LOTS of internal stitches and it's easy to do yourself some damage by overdoing things."
- **You are allowed to rest and recover**
"Be kind to yourself and plan to do things in your own time. Listen to your body and cut yourself some slack. We are conditioned to think we need to be 'busy' and 'useful' all the time, but it's one time you need to just sit back, rest, relax, move gently and recover."
- **Plan ahead**
"Organize some therapy to start a few weeks post-op to get your head around starting a new chapter of your life." Not everyone will need this but if you feel you would benefit, it can be a good idea to get it booked in in advance.
- **Be realistic**
"Undergoing surgery is trauma, while it is physical trauma it has a heavy impact on our mental and emotional health too. So does the anaesthesia! Rest is so very important and if pushed too fast too much can set back even the best recovery from any surgery. Our bodies need weeks and months to heal. Your brain will too."

PREPARING YOUR HOME

- **Give it a deep clean**
"Give your home a good, thorough clean in the weeks leading up to surgery if you can." It can help to get washing up to date where possible too and get the cupboards stocked up in advance.
- **Think ahead**
"It can be a good idea to move items that you use regularly to around waist height - bending down can be difficult with all the internal stitches - your belly feels very tight!"
- **Get organised**
"It is handy to have meals planned for the first couple of weeks so batch cook and freeze some in advance if you can."

PREPARING YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS

- **Manage their expectations**
Orient everyone you live with to the recovery time sheet (in the downloads section) and have it on the fridge for everyone in the house to see so they can be fully aware of expected recovery times. "Do not let other people press their expectations of recovery on you - do it on your timeframe!"
- **Keep them informed**
"Tell those around you that the surgery is not a 'quick fix' and the hormonal aftermath can be very challenging. Share information with them about surgical menopause so they can understand."
- **Ask for help**
"If you have children - then don't be shy in asking for help from those around you. This is major surgery - ask for help with school runs etc, bedtimes and anything else that involves physical activity for the first few weeks. It is better to be over-cautious."

For older children it's best to be open and honest with them. As a parent we have the tendency to shield our children but teenagers are so intuitive. I sat them down, explained what the surgery was and the potential impact on my physical and mental health. I also asked if they could help out around the house more. Alongside this we had a timetable, outlining who was covering school runs/clubs etc to ensure a routine was maintained and that I wasn't asked a million and one questions when I struggled to recall the day of the week. 'Check the timetable' became my go to phrase!

HANDY ITEMS FOR RECOVERY



V Shape Firm Support Pillow

"A 'V pillow' was brilliant to help support me when I was sat in bed. It meant I didn't have to hurt myself using my stomach too much."



'Grabber/reaching stick'

"I got leant a 'grabber stick' which was so helpful for picking things up from the floor when it was hard to bend down."



'Poop stool'

"A small foldable stool for putting my feet up on when on the toilet was a good purchase. It only cost a few £/\$ but it really did help in terms of comfort and ergonomically it is good for your body and helps bowel movements."



Glycerin Suppositories/Stool softeners.

"Painkillers and anaesthesia can cause constipation and with all those internal stitches and swelling - ouch! The softeners that go up your bottom can be really useful to help get things moving! You can thank us later!"



Peppermint tea

Peppermint tea can help stimulate the stomach and keeps your bowels moving. "I drank it constantly from when I woke up to when I went back to bed and it really helped."



Loose nightgowns

"It is likely your stomach will be swollen and so anything around there may be uncomfortable and rub on your stitches/wounds. Get a couple of comfortable nighties."



Treats

"Buy yourself some treats in advance. Recovery can be boring. Get books, podcasts, snacks, your favourite drink, craft materials - line up a list of things to watch on Netflix - whatever you do to relax - stack it up!"





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