

SURGERY PREPARATION — NUTRITION CHECKLIST

Perioperative Nutrition Plan

Preparing your body to heal — a printable checklist for surgery patients

4+ WEEKS BEFORE SURGERY — SCREEN AND BUILD

- **Tell us if any apply:** unintentional weight loss (~10 lb in 3 months), poor appetite, BMI under 18.5, or a very restrictive diet — we may check labs (albumin, vitamin D, blood count, HbA1c) and add supplements. Low albumin (<3.5 g/dL) is one of the strongest predictors of surgical complications.
- **Protein: at least 1.2 g per kg of body weight daily** (about 90–120 g/day for a 170-lb adult), spread over 3–4 meals of 25–40 g each. Reaching your protein goal matters more than calories.
- **Vitamin D:** if you're deficient or rarely in the sun, we replete it — typically 800–2,000 IU of D3 daily. Add calcium 1,000–1,200 mg/day, food first.
- **Diabetes:** target HbA1c below ~7.5–8% before elective surgery — higher levels raise infection risk. Ask us before making medication changes.
- **Iron/anemia:** if you've been told you're anemic, we address it now — treating it before surgery reduces transfusions.
- **Stop smoking and nicotine:** smoking roughly doubles bone-healing failure. Quitting 4+ weeks out significantly cuts complications, and every extra week helps (~19% per week). Ask us about support.
- **Alcohol:** if you average more than 2 drinks/day, stop at least 4 weeks before surgery — this measurably reduces complications.
- **Weight loss (if advised):** never crash-diet before surgery — losing muscle sabotages recovery. Keep protein high while losing fat.
- **GLP-1 medications (Ozempic, Wegovy, Mounjaro, Zepbound, etc.):** tell us AND the anesthesia team. Current guidance keeps most patients on them with a special diet the day before — but the anesthesia team makes the call.

1–2 WEEKS BEFORE SURGERY

- If we flagged you as nutritionally at-risk: **oral nutrition supplement 2–3×/day (≥18 g protein per serving) for at least 7 days** — we may recommend an "immunonutrition" formula (arginine/omega-3).
- **Joint replacement patients:** consider an essential amino acid (EAA) supplement, 20 g twice daily, starting 1 week before surgery — in randomized trials this cut post-operative muscle loss several-fold.
- Confirm your medication plan (blood thinners, NSAIDs, supplements to hold) per your pre-op instructions.

NIGHT BEFORE AND DAY OF SURGERY

- **Evening before:** a carbohydrate-rich drink (~100 g complex carbs — per your pre-op packet).
- **Up to 2 hours before anesthesia:** a clear carbohydrate drink (≥45 g, such as a clear sports drink) — modern fasting rules allow clear liquids until 2 hours out, and arriving carb-loaded rather than starved reduces

post-op insulin resistance and discomfort. *Diabetics and anyone given different instructions: follow YOUR instructions.*

- ☐ No solid food within 6 hours; no fried/fatty food within 8 hours.

☐ AFTER SURGERY — FEED THE HEALING

- ☐ **Protein 1.2–2.0 g/kg/day** for the first 6+ weeks. If appetite is poor, use shakes to hit the number.
- ☐ **Joint replacement:** continue EAA 20 g twice daily for 2 weeks after surgery.
- ☐ **Fracture or wrist/ankle surgery:** vitamin C 500 mg daily for 50 days — shown to reduce the risk of chronic regional pain syndrome after fracture.
- ☐ **Ligament or tendon repair:** optional but promising — 15 g collagen or gelatin + vitamin C about 60 minutes before each rehab session (shown to boost collagen production markers).
- ☐ Keep taking vitamin D + calcium; hydrate; resume a normal varied diet as soon as tolerated.
- ☐ **NSAIDs (ibuprofen, naproxen):** follow YOUR post-op instructions — after some bone procedures we limit them.
- ☐ What about creatine? Safe, but trials after ACL reconstruction and knee replacement showed no clear added benefit — food-first protein and EAAs are where the evidence is.

Evidence base: ERAS® Society and ASPEN enhanced-recovery nutrition pathways; ESPEN surgical nutrition guidelines; ASA 2023 fasting guidelines; Bohl et al. J Arthroplasty 2016 (albumin); Dreyer et al. JCI 2013 & 2018 (EAA/TKA); Zollinger et al. 2007 (vitamin C); Shaw & Baar AJCN 2017 (collagen); WHO 2020 (smoking); Cochrane 2018 (alcohol); 2024 multisociety GLP-1 guidance. Education only — your personal instructions from Dr. Pettit, your anesthesia team, and your pre-op packet always take precedence.



SCAN FOR THE LATEST VERSION ONLINE

robertpettitmd.com/forms/perioperative-nutrition.pdf

This handout is for general patient education and does not replace personalized medical advice. Always follow the specific instructions given by Dr. Pettit and your care team.