

Oophorectomy After Surgery Tips

You made it through your surgery and your hospital stay is over. Here are some tips for when you get home.



Follow your Doctors Instructions



Rest



Medication and Pain Control



Bleeding / Periods



Medical Supplies



Surgical Menopause



Sleeping



Physiotherapy



Exercise



Drink Water



Eat Well



Family and Friends



Support and Talking to Others



Follow your Doctors Instructions

Follow all your Doctor's instructions in regards to wound care, rest, lifting restrictions, driving, surgical bras and garments etc. Most importantly if your Doctor says don't do something – **listen and don't do it!** When discharged from hospital ask all your questions (to Doctors and Nurses) no matter how insignificant you may think they are and have contact numbers for when you get home and have another question or concern.



Rest

- Take it easy for the first few days (laparoscopy) and weeks (if open procedure) after surgery. Be careful not to overdo it and depending on your surgery lifting, carrying and bending may not be possible straight away.

- Don't underestimate your recovery especially if you went into theatre expecting a laparoscopy and ended up having to have open surgery.
- Gradually increase your activity and ease back into your 'normal' routine. By over doing it you are slowing down your recovery and healing.
- Your Doctor will tell you what activities you can undertake.



Medication and Pain Control

Get all your scripts filled immediately (with non child proof caps – you will find the push down and turn type difficult to open with limited arm strength) and in a notebook write down what you take and when. It is easy to lose track of whether you have taken your medication or not and writing it down ensures you have and have taken it at the right time (and haven't taken a double dose). Writing down your pain medication is also useful as it allows you to slowly reduce the amount and strength over a few weeks.

When it comes to pain management take your pain medication regularly. The job of the medicine is to avoid pain. If you get in too much pain you will feel miserable waiting for the pain medication to kick in. Also studies have shown that a patient who has less pain recovers better.

If you are taking HRT it will help alleviate the symptoms of surgical menopause. For some it helps right away, for others it takes some time to find the right HRT and dosage that works. If you are on HRT and start getting menopausal symptoms you should discuss it with your Doctor as your dose may require adjustment. Each woman is different and it may take several adjustments in medication to get the combination of HRT and dosage that works for you. This requires some patience.

From the laparoscopic surgery you may feel discomfort/pain from the gas used to swell your abdomen. It helps to avoid lying flat or in the same position for too long in the first few days. Be prepared for some bloating (this is when you need the comfortable pants and to avoid food and drinks that increase bloating).

If you have open surgery you may experience stabbing, burning or stinging type pain a few days after the surgery near the wound site as the nerves reconnect. This should slowly improve over a week or so. Once again if you have concerns or the pain is unmanageable consult your Doctor.



Bleeding / Periods

Post surgical bleeding can continue for up to three weeks (usually light) and may stop and start as different activities are performed. Some women report that as they start returning to daily activities a bleed would occur as their body adjusted. If you have kept your uterus you may have break through bleeds or periods especially if you are on HRT. If you have any concerns regarding bleeding discuss them with your Doctor.



Medical Supplies

It is useful to have the following at home:

- **Laxatives** as the pain medications/general aesthetic can make you constipated.
- **Ibuprofen.**
- **Lozenges and cough medicine** (coughing is painful when you are recovering from open surgery).
- **TUMS or peppermint lollies** to ease your gas/bloated stomach.
- **Sanitary napkins.**



Surgical Menopause

Use your Surgical Menopause Plan (see **Oophorectomy Before Surgery Tips** document) and update and adjust it depending on your side effects. Write down what triggers side effects and what helps overcome them.

Surgical menopause can be a big adjustment and you may need to try different techniques to reduce the side effects. Listen to your physical body and emotions and ask your Doctor for help if you need it.

Remember that surgical menopause side effects may reduce over time.



Sleeping

When you first get home you may have discomfort or pain from the gas used to inflate your abdomen during a laproscopic surgery or if open surgery where there incision was made. Try to avoid lying flat or in the same position for long periods of time during the first couple of days.

If you have had open surgery you may want to consider having your partner sleep elsewhere as it can be difficult to turn over in bed and more room makes this easier.

If you enter surgical menopause you may suffer from night sweats so might like to have a small fan in your bedroom.

Remember you need your sleep to heal and be able to cope in general so talk to your Doctor and get sleeping tablets if you need them.



Physiotherapy

Continue your pelvic floor exercises to improve strength and reduce the risk of a prolapsed uterus. You may find it useful to revisit your Physiotherapist after your surgery to review your exercises and to check your technique.



Exercise

Follow your Surgeon's instructions regarding exercise. Usually you will be encouraged to walk and have been doing laps of the hospital. When you get home walk a bit further each day. Listen to your body and stop if you get tired or dizzy. Resume more physically active exercise, running, swimming etc. once your Doctor gives approval and gradually build back up to your pre surgery levels.

Once again if you enter surgical menopause exercise will help you reduce the impact of the hot flushes and maintain your weight. So as soon as your Doctor clears you for exercise commit to a daily activity.



Drink Water

It is very important that you drink plenty of water to help your body recover from your surgery. Drinking water also helps to reduce hot flushes.



Eat Well

To assist your recovery each a diet rich in nutrients – in other words eat healthy. For your cells and tissues nutrients are the building blocks and will assist your recovery. So eat a well balanced diet of to help your body. Avoid foods that will increase your bloating and try to recognise if any foods trigger hot flushes so you can avoid them.



Family and Friends

Family and friends usually want to help and want to be updated on your health. However it can be exhausting dealing with endless phone calls and visitors. So think about how you can communicate – Facebook, emails, group sms, having one contact person who updates everyone, a webpage and what works for YOU. Learn how to say no to visitors, wind up phone calls and send people home. It is not selfish to put your health and recovery first (and mental wellbeing). Remember though that most people do care and want to be updated and helpful, therefore Facebook or regular emails can be an excellent way for doing this. Also don't underestimate how uplifting and encouraging it is to read support messages and know that so many people care about you.

Also if family and friends offer help – food, driving, childcare, ironing **let them!**

Finally think about your caretaker (husband, parent, partner), for a preventative surgery they are often overlooked with family and friends not asking 'how are you?' Write them a thank you card, organise a break for them, basically do something nice to show how much you appreciate them and their support and acknowledge that can be a stressful time for them.



Support and Talking to Others

Regardless of your level of support from family and friends you may find it helpful to talk to others who have gone through an oophorectomy. Talking to others who have gone through the same decision making process and procedure will give first hand understanding and support. It is a major deal both physically and especially emotionally to undergo an oophorectomy and it helps to connect with other women who have gone through what you are feeling.

Remember the **Pink Hope Community** are always here for you.