

# Oophorectomy Before Surgery Tips

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Following are some practical tips to help you get prepared for your oophorectomy surgery. Remember being organised and prepared will help you feel more in control of the situation.



Get Healthy



Physiotherapy



Telling Family, Friends and Employers



Prepare for Change in Surgery. From Laparoscopic to Open



Go Shopping



Set up a Medical Folder



Organise your House



Establish your Support Team



Deal with Pre Surgery Nerves



Your Last Period and a Journal



Educate Yourself on Surgical Menopause



Prepare for Surgical Menopause



Develop a Plan for Surgical Menopause



## Get Healthy

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- Do everything you can to get your body in the best physical shape possible to allow it to cope and recover from the surgery.
- Consider getting a blood test with your General Practitioner to check your iron, vitamin levels etc. and take supplements if required, and book in an appointment with your Chiropractor or Physiotherapist if you think they can help you.
- Stop smoking, stop/cut down drinking alcohol, lose weight, exercise and in particular improve your core strength – having a strong core helps so much getting in and out of bed when you can't use your arms to push or hold your weight.
- Use your BRCA/high risk status and decision to have a mastectomy as motivation.



## *Physiotherapy*

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Commit to regularly doing pelvic floor exercises to improve strength and reduce the risk of a prolapsed uterus. You may find it useful to see a Physiotherapist to get a range of exercises and ensure your technique is correct.



## *Telling Family, Friends and Employers*

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Tell people in a way and time frame that works for you. Some people find it helpful to tell everyone early while others prefer to leave it closer to the surgery date. Tell groups of family and friends gradually – **perhaps start with those closest that you know will offer unconditional understanding**. Support is vital but months of well meaning questions and talking about the upcoming surgery can be emotionally wearing. **Be aware people will react differently** or not know how to act or support you. Making the decision to have the surgery is a huge one and often this is the most stressful and emotional time.

Seek advice from your Surgeon regarding how much time you will need off work (this obviously will depend on the type of work you do) but will probably be around three weeks and remember if you have open surgery you will need longer.



## *Prepare for Change in Surgery. From Laparoscopic to Open*

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Go into your surgery aware that your Surgeon may not be able to do a laparoscopic procedure and have to do open surgery. For example, Surgeons may not be able to perform a laparoscopy on women who have had c-sections where the scar tissue adhesion is high however they will not know this until they have started the procedure. So go into theatre prepared that your laparoscopic procedure may change to an open surgery.

Given that the time to recover from an open surgery is longer plan to be able to take more time off work/home responsibilities to be able to recover fully. You may wish to plan as if you are having the open procedure and have all your systems and support in place which you can then scale down if your laparoscopy goes ahead as planned.



## *Go Shopping*

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You will need loose fitting clothes, such as tracksuit pants as you will most likely be bloated from the surgery, and hospital supplies – refer to the [What to Pack for Hospital list](#). If you have open surgery you may find jeans more comfortable after a few days at home as they support your stomach area. Also make sure you have a small fan (for your bedroom at night), sanitary napkins (for hospital and home as you will bleed for about seven days after the surgery), a heat pack, laxatives, TUMS or peppermint lollies (to ease your gas/bloated stomach) and any HRT or other scripts filled.



## *Set up a Medical Folder*

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Have a folder for all your medical paperwork, such as reports, scans, bills, quotes, claim forms, hospital admission etc. Have a summary page of who has been paid, what **Medicare** and **Private Health Fund** claims have been sent and when the claims have been paid. Keep copies of everything that way if a claim isn't paid you can follow it up. A folder and records also helps to keep track of your medical expenses.



## *Organise your House*

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You aren't going to be able to do much for the first few weeks when you get home so:

- **Super clean your house** – floor mopping, vacuuming, bathroom scrubbing etc. (all these things you won't be able to do for a few weeks – try to stretch it out for months!).
- **Stock up on easy to prepare and healthy food** – make sure your pantry is full and only needs topping up/fresh food to be bought
- **Cook up food/buy meals for the freezer and stock up as much as you can** – it really helps not having to worry about preparing food (opening drawers, lifting pans and reaching into cupboards are too much in the first week or so). For those with children you may even want to prepare and freeze their lunches and recess treats.
- **Rearrange your cupboards** (kitchen, bathroom, bedroom) as you will not be able to reach up high so put all the essential/common use items on lower shelves.
- Pay all your bills and put petrol in your car/s.
- Set up childcare and ensure all school notes are signed.

- Write up a contact list of family and friends and what they are able to help out with for the person looking after your family while you are in hospital – this way they will have a number to call and person to contact regarding picking and dropping of children to school and sporting activities etc.
- Prepare for any social events, for example buy and wrap birthday/Christmas presents.
- Organise for someone to drive you to appointments, drive your children to school and after school activities. You won't be able to drive until your Doctor gives approval (usually four weeks after surgery).
- Book in paid for help (eg. a weekly house cleaner) or do a chart for your family and friends with all the tasks (eg. driving, laundry, grocery shopping, ironing, cleaning, cooking) divided up so that everyone knows what they are doing to help out.



## *Establish Your Support Team*

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Determine who needs to be on your team – who in your family, which of your friends and services like Pink Hope. Make sure all team members are informed and ready to support you. People can't help you if you don't let them know what is going on in your life.



## *Deal with Pre Surgery Nerves*

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It is pretty normal to feel pre surgery nerves and natural to have doubts and fear. **Focussing on why you made the decision and the relief you will feel when the surgery is over helps.** Remember waiting is the hardest part. Treat yourself to a massage, spiritual/healing energy treatment (eg. reiki), beauty treatments (waxing, eyelash tinting, etc.), hair treatment (definitely wash your hair before going into hospital as it will be quite a few days before you can shower/wash your hair), farewell bye bye boob party, breast cast, lunch with your partner or girlfriend, whatever makes you feel pampered and helps you relax.



## *Your Last Period and a Journal*

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You may not think you want to celebrate or farewell your last period but it may help you as part of your process of choosing to remove a part of your body (very feminine and personal part of your body). Many women also find it very useful to keep a journal throughout the surgery and recovery process as it allows you to reflect back and see how far you have come and what you have achieved.



## *Educate Yourself on Surgical Menopause*

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Without the ovaries you will enter into surgical menopause and while reducing/treating ovarian cancer risk is of absolute highest priority you need to educate and prepare yourself for surgical menopause. It may not happen right away (for some women it takes a few weeks) and you may only experience some (or none) of the following menopause side effects:

- Cardiovascular problems.
- Osteoporosis/bone loss.
- Hot flushes.
- Fatigue/less energy.
- Joint and bone pain.
- Arthritis.
- Memory loss.
- Lack of libido.
- Vaginal dryness.
- Night sweats.
- Lack of sleep/insomnia.
- Mood swings - impatience/anger.
- Weight gain.
- Hair thinning/fine facial hair.
- Dryer skin.



## *Prepare for Surgical Menopause*

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Make sure you have discussed with your Doctor surgical menopause, the associated risks and what medication (HRT) you are able to take. Your genetic status, family history, the type of surgery you have (eg just removal of ovaries or full hysterectomy) and if you have had breast surgery (mastectomy) will all impact on what HRT your Doctor/s recommends for you – or possibly you are advised not to have any HRT.



## *Develop a Plan for Surgical Menopause*

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Consider having the following organised to help you manage your surgical menopause:

- HRT** – if your Doctor approves usage of HRT have your scripts filled.
- Herbal medicine** – if you aren't using HRT consider herbal supplements to help with the menopause side effects.
- Osteoporosis** – consider taking supplements such as calcium and vitamin D for bone density.
- Pain relief** – consider taking fish oil for bone/arthritis type aches or getting acupuncture.

- **Vaginal lubricants** – purchase as and when needed, eg KY or PJUR women.
- **Sleeping tablets** – have your Doctor write you a script and get it filled.
- **Drink water** – drink lots of water will help with the hot flushes.
- **Fan** – a small fan in your bedroom to help with night sweats.
- **Layers of clothes** – so you can easily remove a layer when you get a hot flush.
- **Stress** – stress may trigger/increase hot flushes so develop a strategy to reduce your stress levels.
- **Diet and exercise** – try to prevent weight gain by eating a balanced diet and exercising, weight bearing exercise also helps keeps your bones strong and some women report it helps reduces the hot flushes. Alcohol and some foods (eg spicy) may bring on your hot flushes so try to recognise these and so you can avoid them.
- **Your emotions** – be aware you may be very emotional after your oophorectomy due to feelings of grief and loss at no longer being able to get pregnant/have children and combined with any menopause side effects feel overwhelmed and unable to cope. Talk to your Doctor for help and assistance.