



Your Plastic Surgery Recovery Checklist

A complete, printable framework covering every stage of preparation and recovery — from booking your surgery to feeling like yourself again. Check off each item as you complete it, and always defer to your own surgeon's specific instructions over any general guidance here.

PATIENT NAME:

PROCEDURE:

SURGERY DATE:

START HERE

I Get Your Body Ready on Paper First

- ☐ Schedule pre-op labs / EKG as soon as your surgery date is set
- ☐ Give your surgeon a complete list of all medications, OTC drugs, vitamins, and supplements
- ☐ Confirm with your surgeon and prescribing doctor which medications/supplements to pause, and when
- ☐ Stop nicotine (cigarettes, vaping, patches, gum) at least 4 weeks before surgery
- ☐ Stop alcohol 48–72 hours before surgery
- ☐ Keep all appointments for managing chronic conditions (diabetes, blood pressure, thyroid, etc.)
- ☐ Read and sign informed consent forms — ask questions until you fully understand them

BUILD YOUR RESERVES

2 The Weeks Before Surgery Matter

- ☐ Add a lean protein source to every meal for 2–4 weeks before surgery
- ☐ Eat colorful vegetables and fruit daily for collagen-supporting vitamins A and C
- ☐ Stay consistently hydrated; follow clear-liquid instructions the day before surgery
- ☐ Keep up daily walks and light stretching — avoid starting anything new or strenuous
- ☐ Prioritize 7–9 hours of sleep nightly
- ☐ Use a stress-relief tool that works for you — walks, breathing exercises, journaling

HANDLE THE LOGISTICS

3 So Recovery Can Just Be Recovery

- ☐ Sign and return all consent forms and facility paperwork by the deadline given
- ☐ Get total costs (surgeon, anesthesia, facility, garments, follow-ups) confirmed in writing

- ☐ Arrange a responsible adult to drive you home after surgery
- ☐ Line up a caregiver to stay with you for at least the first 24 hours
- ☐ Set up a comfortable recovery spot — avoid stairs, keep essentials within reach
- ☐ Wash sheets and towels in advance
- ☐ Confirm time off work and any documentation your surgeon's office needs to provide

THE FINAL STRETCH

4 The 24 Hours Before Surgery

The Night Before

- ☐ Follow fasting instructions exactly — nothing to eat or drink after the time given (including water, mints, gum)
- ☐ Shower with antibacterial soap if instructed; do not shave the surgical area
- ☐ Lay out loose clothing you can put on without lifting your arms, plus slip-on shoes
- ☐ Remove nail polish if instructed

The Morning Of

- ☐ Take only medications your surgical team specifically approved, with a small sip of water if allowed
- ☐ Confirm your ride and pickup time
- ☐ Bring photo ID, insurance card, medication/allergy list, glasses case, and advance directive copy
- ☐ Leave jewelry and valuables at home
- ☐ Call your surgeon right away about any new illness, rash, or cut near the surgical site

THE FIRST 24–72 HOURS

5 What Recovery Actually Feels Like at First

- ☐ Take pain medication on the schedule given — don't wait for pain to become severe
- ☐ Learn how to empty/measure your surgical drain, if you have one, and log output
- ☐ Wear compression garments exactly as directed, not just "when it feels right"
- ☐ Set up pillows/wedge in advance for any required sleep positioning
- ☐ Respect lifting, bending, and overhead-reaching restrictions even if you feel fine

CARING FOR YOUR HEALING SKIN

6 Protecting Your Results From the Inside Out

- ☐ Follow your surgeon's specific dressing-change instructions; wash hands before touching incisions
- ☐ Confirm with your surgeon before getting incisions wet — most patients shower in 1–3 days
- ☐ Watch for infection signs: spreading redness, increasing pain, pus, or fever (see warning signs below)
- ☐ Start silicone scar sheets/gel once your surgeon confirms the incision is fully closed

- ☐ Protect healing scars from sun exposure with clothing or high-SPF sunscreen once cleared

STOCK UP BEFORE, NOT AFTER

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Build Your Recovery Station Before Surgery Day

- ☐ Pre-made freezer meals & high-protein snacks
- ☐ Water bottle, straws, small cooler
- ☐ Wedge or reading pillow for elevated sleep
- ☐ Robe that opens in front, zip-front tops
- ☐ Reacher/grabber tool, shower stool, non-slip socks
- ☐ Unscented soap, extra gauze/tape, small mirror
- ☐ Silicone scar sheets or gel (for later in recovery)
- ☐ Phone/tablet stand, headphones, entertainment queue

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WHEN TO CALL

Know the Warning Signs

Call Your Surgeon's Office Promptly For:

- Fever over 101°F (38.3°C)
- Increasing pain not controlled by medication, especially after day 3–4
- Spreading redness or warmth around an incision
- Pus, foul-smelling drainage, or a reopened wound
- Sudden or one-sided excessive swelling
- Bleeding that soaks through dressings

Seek Emergency Care Immediately For:

- Chest pain or pressure
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Calf pain, swelling, or warmth in one leg
- Fainting, confusion, or a racing heartbeat that won't settle
- Any allergic reaction — hives, facial swelling, trouble breathing

When in doubt, call. A quick phone call that turns out to be nothing costs you five minutes.

THE ROAD BACK

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A General Timeline — Your Surgeon's Plan Always Comes First

Days 1–3	Rest is the job. Short walks around the house; no driving or lifting.
Week 1	First follow-up visit; drains removed if applicable. Light walking increases.
Weeks 2–3	Many patients return to non-physical work. Swelling and bruising improve.
Weeks 4–6	Common milestone for light exercise with surgeon's clearance.
Weeks 6–12	Most patients cleared for full exercise, procedure-dependent.
3–12 months	Final results settle and refine; scars continue to soften and lighten.

This checklist is an independent educational resource and general framework — it is not a substitute for the personalized instructions your own surgical team provides. Always defer to your surgeon's specific guidance over any general timeline listed

here.