

Preparing for your Gynecologic Surgery

Your Surgery: _____

Your Surgeons: Dr. Mona Mazgani, Dr. Trevor Cohen, Dr. Shaina (Joohyun) Lee

Surgery Location: Victoria General Hospital (1 Hospital Way, Victoria, BC V8Z 6R5)

Before Surgery

- You recover faster from surgery if you are in the best possible condition before your surgery.
 - **Exercise:** Do some gentle exercise 15-30 minutes a day during the weeks leading up to your surgery.
 - **Smoking cessation:** People who stop smoking before surgery may have fewer complications after surgery.
 - **Alcohol:** Alcohol can interfere with medications given during or after surgery. Do not drink any alcohol for at least 48 hours before the surgery.
 - Call our office if you feel sick or need to cancel your surgery for any reason.
- Before you have your surgery, think about what you will need when you go home. If possible, get things ready ahead of time:
 - You may need help with meals, laundry, or bathing. Try to arrange for family or friends, or community care services (such as Home Care Nursing) to help you.
 - Consider preparing and freezing meals.
 - Think about where you will go after you leave the hospital. Who will drive you home from the hospital and who will stay with you?
- **Medications**
 - Stop taking all herbal supplements and vitamin E for seven days before your surgery.
 - You may see an anesthesiologist or internal medicine doctor before your surgery. Your surgeon will arrange this.
 - Follow instructions from the anesthesiologist or internal medicine doctor about when to stop your medications for high blood pressure, diabetes, epilepsy, or other medical conditions.
 - If you take blood thinners (clopidogrel, apixaban, or others), follow instructions from the anesthesiologist or internal medicine doctor about when to stop this medication. Call us if you need clarification.

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The day before your surgery

- Double check what time you need to get to the hospital for your surgery.
- **Antibacterial sponge wash:** You can buy this sponge wash at any pharmacy. Do the wash the night before and the morning of your surgery (please see separate handout for instructions).
- Stop eating **solid foods at midnight.**
- You may drink **clear fluids** until 3 hours before your surgery. This helps you stay hydrated and keeps your blood sugar normal during surgery.
 - Clear fluids include water, apple or cranberry juice, popsicles.
 - Do not drink any dairy products or protein drinks.

- **What to bring to the hospital on the day of surgery**

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Government issued ID or Care card ● Emergency contact information ● Comfortable clothing ● Hearing aids, glasses, dentures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sugar-free chewing gum (for recovery – explained below) ● Toothbrush and toothpaste ● Mobility aid, a cane or walker |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Shoes or slippers with non-slip soles ● All your medications | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Your CPAP, if you use one |

After Surgery

- After your surgery, we want to control your pain, prevent complications, increase your activity, and return you to your normal diet. Most people stay in the hospital for 1-3 days, depending on the type of procedure.
- **Activity:**
 - The sooner you get up and move around, the better it is for your recovery.
 - Change your position in bed at least every 2 hours.
 - **Do leg exercises every hour** while you are awake and in bed.
 - Move your feet around in circles, 5 times in each direction.
 - Bend your foot up and down 5 times.
 - Bend your knees by sliding your heel up and down on the bed, 5 times.
 - We strongly encourage you to sit up and walk as soon as possible after surgery. Our nurses will help you up the first time and at other times if needed.
 - Walk around the hallway at least 5-10 times per day while in hospital.

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- **Breathing Exercises:**
 - Deep breathing and coughing can help to clear mucus from your lungs and prevent pneumonia (a lung infection).
 - **Do breathing exercises every hour** while you are awake:
 - Take a deep breath in through your nose. Hold the breath for a count of 3, then breathe out slowly through your mouth. Repeat 5 times.
 - Your nurse will give you an incentive spirometer to strengthen your lungs. Ask the nurse how to use this.
 - **Do this coughing exercise** after breathing exercises:
 - Gently hug a pillow into your surgical site to protect the area. Take a quick deep breath in, then cough. Repeat 2 times.
- **Bladder and Bowel Function:**
 - Help your bowels return to normal:
 - **Chew gum for 15 minutes every 2-3 hours** while awake.
 - Drink fluids.
 - Walk around the hospital.
 - **Tell your nurse** when you have a bowel movement.
 - You may have a urinary catheter placed during your surgery.
 - The catheter will be removed before you go home. Your nurse in the hospital will walk you through this process.
 - **Once the catheter is removed, tell your nurse if you are unable to urinate.**
 - You may have to go home with the urinary catheter in place. We will arrange for Home Care Nursing support to help with this.
- **Pain Management:**
 - You will want to manage your pain to stay comfortable, so you will be able to do your normal activities such as sitting and walking.
 - Your nurse will give you **extra strength (1000mg) acetaminophen (Tylenol)** every 6-12 hours for pain control, unless you have known allergies or other problems.
 - Talk to your nurse if you need other pain medications.

When You Go Home from the Hospital

- Continue with light activities for 6 weeks after surgery. Do not lift anything over 10 pounds or do intense exercise during this time.

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- You may be given **blood thinner pills** to take after your surgery. Please take these as prescribed to prevent blood clots.
- **After hysterectomy:** Do not put anything in your vagina for 6 weeks (no baths, intercourse, dilators, or douching).
- **Wound care**
 - Your nurse will remove your bandage before you go home. Keep the wound open to the air. If the staples catch on your clothing, you may place a clean, light bandage over top.
 - You can shower 2 days after your surgery. Keep the incision dry after showering by patting it with a clean towel.
 - Do not apply creams, lotions, or ointments to the incision, unless directed to do so by your surgeon.
 - **Vulvar surgery:**
 - See handout for wound care.

Follow Up with your Care Team

- If your wound is closed with staples, make an appointment with your family doctor to have them removed **7-10 days after your surgery**. If you do not have a family doctor, please let your surgeon know.
- Your surgeon will call you with the final pathology results about 3-4 weeks after the surgery. If you do not hear from us by 4 weeks, please call our office.
- We will see you for a post-operative assessment in 6-8 weeks. You **do not** need to make this appointment. You will get a letter in the mail after your surgery with appointment details.
- **Go to the nearest emergency department if you have:**
 - Fever (above 38.0°C or 100.4°F).
 - Severe vomiting and you are unable to keep fluids down.
 - Pain you cannot manage with oral medication.
 - Heavy bleeding (soaking more than 1 sanitary pad per hour for 2 consecutive hours).
- Please call our nurse line if you have questions about your surgery or recovery. We will be happy to see you earlier if needed.

Contact information

BC Cancer - Victoria
2410 Lee Avenue
Victoria, BC

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| BC Cancer Gynecology Secretary Team | Tamy: 250.519.5578 Barbara: 250.519.5571 |
| BC Cancer Gynecology Nurse | 250.519.5488 |