



Postoperative Recovery

Whether you've just had top surgery, bottom surgery, or another gender-affirming procedure, you deserve care that sees you as a whole person. That includes physical healing, emotional processing, and the little things that often get left out of surgical consults.

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General Recovery Tips

- **Pain medications:** Stay ahead of the pain. This isn't the time to tough it out. Take pain medications as directed by your surgeon.
- **Rest really means rest:** Even if you feel "fine," healing is still happening. Healing takes weeks, sometimes months. If you're able to, give yourself permission to slow down and let your body recover at its own pace.
- **Post-op changes:** Fluids, smells, and swelling can all be normal. Ask your surgeon what's expected and what might be a sign to check in.
- **Healing can be emotional too:** Surgery can bring up a lot of emotions like grief, euphoria, or fatigue. Whatever you feel is valid, and it's all part of healing.
- **You might need more help than you expected:** Everyday things like getting dressed, making meals, or grabbing something from a shelf can be harder than you thought. It's okay to ask for support. Taking care of yourself includes letting others care for you too.

Trans Masc Recovery

Top Surgery (Chest Masculinization/Chest Contouring)

- **Set up your space with care:** Try to move everyday essentials to waist height so you don't have to reach overhead. After surgery you likely won't be able to lift your arms above shoulder height.
- **Choose comfy clothes:** Zip-up hoodies and button-down shirts are easier to get on and off without lifting your arms.
- **Support your sleep:** A wedge pillow or U-shaped pregnancy pillow can help you stay comfortably propped up while you rest.
- **Practice gentle mobility:** Before surgery, try getting in and out of bed without using your arms. It can make those first few days feel a little easier.
- **Stay fresh, even if you can't shower:** Dry shampoo, body wipes, and a soft washcloth can go a long way when full showers aren't an option yet.

Bottom Surgery (Phalloplasty, Metoidioplasty, Hysterectomy, Oophorectomy)

- **Helpful tools for movement:** A grabber tool can make things easier when bending or stretching feels tough. Little adjustments like this can make a big difference.
- **Bathroom care matters:** Pain medications can cause constipation, which is the last thing you want to deal with while healing. Stool softeners or fiber-rich snacks can help keep things moving.
- **Ease pressure when sitting:** Loose-fitting clothes and soft cushions can help you feel more comfortable as you heal.

Trans Femme Recovery

Top Surgery (Feminizing Breast Surgery/Breast Augmentation)

- **Set up your space with care:** Try to move everyday essentials to waist height so you don't have to reach overhead. After surgery you likely won't be able to lift your arms above shoulder height.
- **Wear what feels good and supports healing:** A surgical bra or compression garment might be recommended after surgery to help with swelling and support.
- **Choose comfy clothes:** Zip-up hoodies and button-down shirts are easier to get on and off without lifting your arms.
- **Support your sleep:** A wedge pillow or U-shaped pregnancy pillow can help you stay comfortably propped up while you rest.
- **Stay fresh, even if you can't shower:** Dry shampoo, body wipes, and a soft washcloth can go a long way when full showers aren't an option yet.

Bottom Surgery (Vaginoplasty, Orchiectomy, Scrotoectomy, Clitoroplasty)

- **Prepare for dilation time:** Dilation can take time and energy. Some days may feel harder than others, and that's okay.
- **Keep things clean with care:** A peri bottle can make gentle cleansing easier when you're not ready for full showers yet.
- **Ease pressure when sitting:** Loose-fitting clothes and soft cushions can help you feel more comfortable as you heal.
- **Helpful tools for movement:** A grabber tool can make things easier when bending or stretching feels tough. Little adjustments like this can make a big difference.
- **Bathroom care matters:** Pain medications can cause constipation, which is the last thing you want to deal with while healing. Stool softeners or fiber-rich snacks can help keep things moving.

Cost & Coverage

OHIP covers many parts of surgery, but not always everything you might need afterward. Things like certain medications, surgical bras, dilation tools, or extra supplies might not be included. It can be helpful to ask your care team what's covered and what isn't so that there are fewer surprises later.

While we often talk about chest and genital surgeries, there are many different procedures that folks access as part of gender-affirming care such as facial feminization surgery, voice surgery, or body contouring. Unfortunately, these are usually not covered by OHIP and may only be available through private clinics.

If costs feel stressful, you're not alone. Some community-based clinics or 2SLGBTQIA+ health centres might be able to help. It's always okay to ask.

Common Concerns

Q. What if I'm not healing "fast enough"?

A. Healing isn't linear. Some days feel better than others—and that's normal. Swelling, fatigue, and emotional ups and downs are common. If something doesn't feel right, check in with your provider, but try not to compare your healing timeline to others'. You're not behind. You're recovering.

Q. What if I don't have anyone to pick me up after surgery?

A. Some hospitals won't discharge you unless someone is there to take you home. If you don't have a support person, this can be stressful and might even feel like a barrier to getting care. You're not alone in this. Some folks have delayed surgery or made other arrangements, like asking a taxi driver to act as their contact. If this is something you're facing, it's okay to talk to your care team. They may be able to help you explore options or work with you to find a discharge plan that feels safe and realistic.

Q. What if my support person doesn't know how to help?

A. That's completely normal. Most people supporting someone after surgery haven't done it before. You can ask for specific help, like preparing meals, tracking medications, or just being nearby. If you're not feeling up to it, your support person can also follow up with the surgeon, clinic, or nurse on your behalf. Just make sure your care team knows they're involved. If either of you are unsure about something, Health Connect Ontario is available to answer medical questions, and community forums or peer support groups can be great places to learn together.

Q. What if I feel isolated during recovery?

A. Feeling alone during recovery is common, and it's okay to name that. If you're up for it, reaching out to someone who's been through a similar experience can make a big difference. Even one honest conversation can help you feel more connected. Peer support lines are also available if you need someone to talk to. For folks under 30 years old in Ontario, YouthLine offers confidential support from other 2SLGBTQIA+ youth. Trans Lifeline is another option for trans folks across North America looking for peer connection.

There's no perfect way to recover, and no one right way to feel. Some folks bounce back quickly. Others need more time. Both are okay. You might have questions. You might need support. You might move slowly, and that's still progress. You're not falling behind. You're not alone. You are, and have always been, enough.



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