Preparing for Colorectal Surgery Enhanced Recovery After Surgery (ERAS)

Welcome

You are scheduled for a colorectal surgical procedure that will be performed by one of our skilled physicians from the Orlando Health Colon & Rectal Institute. Our specialized team adheres to the ERAS program, a modern approach designed to help you recover faster, improve your well-being, and ensure a safe return home.

This guide will provide you with clear directions and outline how you can actively participate in your healing process. Rest assured that your safety and well-being are our priority; we are dedicated to offering you the highest standard of care and the latest technology that exists.

**Note: Some information in this brochure is intentionally repeated to help reinforce key messages and support your understanding and recovery.*

Before Your Surgery: "How do I prepare?"

You can take steps to support your recovery even before surgery. Here's how you can actively help your body get ready for a smoother healing process.

Attend Pre-Surgical Appointments

- Attend all pre-surgical appointments to meet your surgical and anesthesia teams.
- Ask questions - understanding the process helps you feel more prepared.
- Review your medications, as some may need adjustment or discontinuation.

Bowel Preparation

- A bowel cleanse may be required the day before surgery. Your physician's office will provide written instructions.
- Consume clear fluids such as apple juice, broth, Gatorade®, and tea without milk, solid foods must not be consumed if a bowel cleanse is prescribed.
- Specific instructions will be given regarding when to stop eating and drinking.
- You may need to drink a special clear carbohydrate-rich beverage the night before and/or the morning of surgery (if you have diabetes an alternative can be provided).

Smoking Cessation

If you smoke, try to quit as soon as possible. The longer you stay smoke-free before surgery, the greater the benefits. Ideally, quitting 4–6 weeks before your operation can significantly improve healing and recovery.

Physical Preparation

Daily walks can aid recovery. Pair them with breathing exercises: inhale for two steps, exhale for two steps. Adjust to your rhythm.

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Day of Surgery: What to Expect?

Arrival

Please arrive at the hospital at least two hours before your scheduled surgery. Your care team will provide you with an exact time.

Pre-Surgery

- IV fluids and antibiotics will be given to prepare you for the procedure and reduce the risk of infection.
- You will meet your anesthesia team and can ask them any questions.

Surgery

- Your surgery will be conducted by your surgeon, supported by a specialized team. All aspects of the procedure will be discussed and agreed upon beforehand.
- Techniques may include minimally invasive methods such as laparoscopic or robotic approaches. If necessary, open surgery may be utilized. Any potential changes will be thoroughly discussed with you in advance.

After Surgery: Post-Operative Goals (Day 0–1)

Moving & Walking

Movement aids recovery and is within your control. You will be encouraged to:

- Sit up in bed within a few hours and dangle your legs at the bedside.
- Get out of bed and walk with assistance the same day or next morning.

Nutrition

- You will begin drinking clear fluids 2–6 hours after surgery.
- Regular food will be added as tolerated, no need to wait days.
- One important thing to remember after surgery is that how much you eat matters more than what you eat. You do **not** need to eat it or drink it all; **pick and choose** what you feel like having.
- Listen to your body. If you start to feel full or experience any nausea, **stop**. You can always try again later or the next day.

Pain Control

- Pain management will involve various medications, not just opioids.
- Medications to control nausea will be provided as needed.

Administration of Fluids and Use of Tubes

- IV fluids will be given initially and reduced as oral intake starts.
- Urinary catheters and drains will be removed when medically appropriate.

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After Surgery, You Have an Active Role in Your Recovery - What You Can Do to Heal:

Eat Early

- Begin with clear liquids and gradually add soft foods.
- Choose nutritious foods for healing.
- **80%** of patients can eat normally within 24-36 hours post-surgery.
- Eat what you tolerate; no need to rush back to regular habits.
- If you feel full, nauseous, or vomit, stop eating and notify your care team.
- Chewing sugar-free gum may help stimulate intestinal activity.

Start Moving Early

- Walking early during recovery reduces the risk of blood clots and lung infections and accelerates bowel function.

Practice Breathing Exercises

- Controlled coughing and deep breathing can prevent pneumonia. Get instructions from your care team.

Communication

- Tell your care team of pain, nausea, bloating, or any other concerns.

When Will I Go Home?

- Most patients go home **2–4 days after surgery**. This is an average; some may leave earlier, while others might require a longer stay.
- **Your motivation matters.** Patients who are active and engaged in their recovery often go home earlier.
- If you are eating and drinking without problems, **you usually won't be expected to have a bowel movement before going home.**
- Finishing your recovery at home with family and friends can help you heal better. Being in your own bed, having your own bathroom, and eating your favorite foods makes you feel more comfortable and can speed up your recovery.

To be discharged, you will need to:

- Eat and drink adequately without difficulty.
- Manage pain with oral medication instead of IV fluids.
- Walk safely, either independently or with support.
- Show no signs of severe complications.

Before discharge, you will receive:

- Wound-care instructions
- Medication instructions
- Follow-up appointment and emergency contact number

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Common Symptoms:

- Mild bloating
- Changes in Bowel Habits
- Decreased appetite
- Tiredness

Contact Your Surgeon if You Notice:

- Fever or chills
- Severe abdominal pain
- Persistent nausea or vomiting
- Redness, swelling, or pus around the incision
- Difficulties with urination or bowel movements
- Significant bleeding at the wound site or from the rectum

Important Reminders

Recovery Period: Usually, recovery takes about 6 to 8 weeks. You often recover better at home where you can eat your own food, sleep in your own bed, and be near family in a familiar environment.

Patient Participation: Recovery requires teamwork between you and your healthcare providers.

Physical Activity: It's vital to stay physically active at home. Make sure to take short walks several times a day to help with recovery.

Compliance with Instructions: Follow your medication schedule and stick to dietary and activity guidelines.

Surgery Follow-up: Before you leave the hospital, you'll have a follow-up appointment set for 1-2 weeks after discharge. This visit lets your surgeon check your healing, review the pathology report (if needed), and give further recommendations about treatments or necessary follow-ups.

**Subsequent follow-up visits may be scheduled with one of our skilled advanced practice providers, who works closely with your surgical team to ensure continuity of care.*

Your Colorectal Surgery ERAS Team Is Here for You!

Our Commitment to You

At the Orlando Health Colon & Rectal Institute (CRI), we provide care of the highest quality. Each member of our team has been carefully selected and is highly trained in colorectal surgery and patient-centered care. Our commitment to you is clear: To deliver the best available treatment with dedication, compassion, and excellence. We value your trust in us and are here to support you throughout your care.

Should you have any questions or require assistance at any time, please do not hesitate to contact us at (407)-422-3790.

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