

Plastic Surgeon and Breast Reconstruction Specialist Dr. Constance M. Chen with Tips for Recovering from Surgery

Good Nutrition and Movement Helps When Recovering from Surgery

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- Each individual's experience and reactions to [surgery](#) is different and related to a number of variables, such as the reaction and aftereffects of anesthesia, the type and location of the surgery, and the patient's general overall physical and mental health. With that said, Plastic Surgeon and [Breast Reconstruction](#) specialist Dr. [Constance M. Chen](#) offers that all surgery is trauma to the whole body and as a result, there is inevitably impact from surgery beyond the immediate surgical site.



Dr. Constance M. Chen

"Surgery brings a stress response to the body that produces metabolic changes," says Dr. Chen. "The body responds to surgery using all its energies to repair and heal the injury at the surgical site. This leaves the rest of the body to protect for itself with its limited resources. It's no surprise then that, for example, areas like the skin, hair, and nails may become thin, dry, and brittle after

a surgery, as they lose the body's energy and resources that normally support their good and ongoing health and replenishment."

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Dr. Constance M. Chen

The most obvious post-surgical reaction is swelling. This appears, along with bleeding and bruising, at the surgical site, but sometimes affects other parts of the body also, with the skin becoming swollen and stretched out.

“Swelling is a completely typical and vital part of recovering

from a surgery,” says Dr. Chen, because it intensifies the blood supply to the surgical site to promote healing.”

Good Nutrition Encourages Post-Surgical Healing

“Patient's often ask if they should take special supplements or vitamins to improve their post-

surgical healing. What is even more important is to allow the body to rest and to restore its needs through good nutrition and healthy foods. Dr. Chen offers the following tips for good post-surgical nutrition to encourage healing:

- Focus on lean proteins: After surgery, extra protein may be needed from sources such as red meat, fish, poultry, eggs, beans, and legumes to help the body heal. Collagen, the most abundant protein in the body, plays a key role in repairing damaged tissue.
- Iron: Iron is necessary for replenishing red blood cells. Focus on liver, red meat, and green leafy vegetables.
- Fluids: Drink 6-8 glasses of water a day to help reduce the swelling and puffiness. Additionally proper hydration is helpful in counteracting constipation as a result of anesthesia.
- Fiber: Again, lots of factors related to surgery including anesthesia, pain medication, and reduced activity, all cause constipation. In addition to drinking plenty of water, focus on foods that are high in fiber such as prunes, beans and legumes, bran flakes, oatmeal, apples and pears.
- Vitamin Citrus fruits and bell peppers: Vitamin C is depleted by stress and surgery causes stress. Citrus fruits and bell peppers are excellent sources of vitamin C.
- Pineapples and papayas both contain enzymes that help digest proteins and reduce swelling and inflammation.

Dr. Chen adds that some people need to eat more than usual after a surgery to counterbalance for the extra energy that the body needs for healing. For example, if a given patient's basal metabolism requires 2,000 calories a day to remain level, after major surgery 3,000 calories a day may be needed to maintain that same basal metabolism and heal. Eating more after a surgery is sometimes difficult because patient's have a loss of appetite.

Movement is also key to healing

Dr. Chen also offers that getting patients moving and up and around as soon as possible after surgery is crucial to the healing process. The first goal is usually just walking, which offers terrific benefits including reducing the risk of blood clots and expanding the lungs.

"The most common cause of a fever after surgery is atelectasis. Here, shallow breaths cause the aveoli in the lungs to collapse," says Dr. Chen. The risk of getting atelectasis is reduced by simple movement.

"The body gets weakened very quickly and needs to move. Any movement is helpful. Gentle stretching can stimulate the muscle fibers and reduce stiffness," adds Dr. Chen. Once the initial healing has occurred, ongoing and regular exercise increases the heart rate such that the blood moves more quickly and the lungs fill with oxygen. All of these processes help with health. And the fringe benefit is that it allows for an overall feeling of well-being as experienced before the surgery.

Surgery is a trauma for everyone. Patients should carefully follow the post-surgical instructions from their doctor. And, they should understand that the body needs time to heal and be patient

and forgiving with themselves as their bodies recover.

Constance M. Chen, MD, is a board-certified plastic surgeon with special expertise in the use of innovative natural techniques to optimize medical and cosmetic outcomes for women undergoing breast reconstruction. She is Clinical Assistant Professor of Surgery (Plastic Surgery) at Weill Cornell Medical College and Clinical Assistant Professor of Surgery (Plastic Surgery) at Tulane University School of Medicine. www.constancechenmd.com

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