

Michael van Straten's Bodytalk

ARE YOU FIT FOR YOUR OPERATION?

As you read this there will be many of you waiting for your names to get to the top of the hospital waiting list and the summons to report for your operation. Whether your surgery is for a simple hernia repair, varicose veins, a hip replacement or a heart by-pass operation, you should be planning now to get yourself in peak condition for the surgery. The idea of improving your state of fitness for sporting reasons or of simply taking up a course of training just to keep yourself healthy is not new, but very few people ever consider getting fit for their operation. With a few simple changes in your diet and lifestyle you will not only make the surgeon's job easier, but you will also reduce the risks of infection and shorten the time it takes for you to return to a full and active life.

If you're waiting for any operation involving your joints - back, hip or knee for example - you can make an enormous difference to the speed of your recovery by getting the surrounding muscles into really good shape before surgery. Start right now on a programme of gentle exercises, whichever are appropriate to your present condition.

For knee joints practice lifting small weights - put a 2 lb bag of rice in a carrier bag, tie a loop of string to the handles, sit in a high chair with the loop over your foot and slowly raise and lower the leg two or three times to start with, gradually increasing to fifteen. Then, lying face down on your bed with your foot over the end, repeat the exercise raising and lowering the leg from the knee joint. This builds up the muscles on both sides of the thigh. The same exercises will help prepare you for a hip replacement.

If you are facing abdominal surgery then this exercise will build up the tummy muscles. Lie flat on your back on the floor and bend your right knee with your

right foot flat on the ground. Stretch your left fingertips towards the right knee just raising the head and left shoulder blade off the ground. Hold that position for five seconds then relax. Repeat two or three times, then change to the other leg and hand. Build up to ten repetitions. You can work out your own similar simple exercises for other muscle groups. The real benefit comes from regular repetition, so do your exercises every single day.

Many people are worried by the prospect of an anaesthetic, but with modern techniques there is very little to worry about. If you are a smoker this is the best reason you ever had for giving up, and if you take little or no exercise, now's the time to start improving your breathing. If your condition allows, get into the habit of regular daily brisk walks, or get yourself to the local swimming pool at least three times a week.

Obesity is the great enemy of the surgeon and if you are seriously overweight you must make a determined effort to shed some surplus pounds. This is even more important if you're having surgery on your feet, knees, hips or lower back, as the extra weight you are carrying will slow down your recovery and may even interfere with the successful outcome of the operation.

To increase your body's natural resistance to infection, improve your circulation and consequently the speed of healing, and to ensure that your whole system is in the best possible condition, you need to increase your consumption of some of the key nutrients. Lots of vitamin C, more betacarotenes, and extra vitamin E are the vital factors. You can get all these from more fresh fruit and vegetables for the C; orange, yellow and dark green leaves - carrots, broccoli, spinach, apricots, for the betacarotene; and nuts, seeds and good olive oil for the E.

Minerals are also very important, particularly zinc and iron. Pumpkin seeds, shellfish and liver are good sources of zinc, and liver, beans, chickpeas, spinach and eggs provide iron.

For some extra health insurance take 3 teaspoons of BioStrath Elixir and 1 tablet of Selenium ACE and one tablet of Seven Seas Multibionta each day

for at least one month before your operation. The Multibionta not only provides 100% of most essential minerals and vitamins but also the probiotic good bacteria which improve digestion, boost your natural resistance and help offset the disadvantages of the antibiotics which you are bound to be given after surgery.

The real success depends on the surgeon's skill, but you can make his job easier, and your recovery quicker by following these simple steps.

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