

POST-SURGERY MILESTONES

Think of your recovery as a positive journey you're taking to enrich your life and health. After surgery, it's important to find ways to be positive and to feel as good as you can. Studies show that some patients experience depression after major surgery, such as heart surgery, which can slow down recovery. For those already managing depression, surgery may bring more challenges.

Focus on what you can do to support your recovery and tell your health care professional if you notice new or worsening symptoms or feel you are struggling emotionally. **Remember you are not alone.** Reach out to your care team for support and explore strategies, such as counseling or peer support groups, to help you navigate this part of your journey. Write down your progress. It helps to take time to notice the good things that are happening. If you write them down, you will push yourself to note what's going right.

DAY 1 • YOU'RE ON YOUR WAY

DAY 1

You may feel groggy and confused, especially if you're attached to unfamiliar IVs and machines. **BUT pay attention** to what's going on to help you get better!

Do your best to follow post-op instructions. It's a step toward your full recovery.

Enjoy your progress, even if you're just moving from lying down to sitting up. That's progress!

Even if it hurts, celebrate those first steps. Even walking to the bathroom is an important part of moving forward.



TRACK YOUR PROGRESS

My moment of achievement on my first day: ____



I am thankful for: _____

DAYS 1-3

DAYS 1-3

Be gentle with yourself. It may still be a bit awkward, but during this phase, you may be able to shower, get dressed, and remove machines and IVs.

All of these small moments are steps toward feeling more like yourself again. It can be easy to focus on how you're not better yet, but you'll do yourself and your recovery a favor if you do your best to reframe it toward the positive.

By the end of day three, you will likely be able to plan to do some enjoyable activities:

- ☒ choose some movies you'll enjoy
- ☒ invite a friend to come by
- ☒ read a good book
- ☒ play a board game with a family member



TRACK YOUR PROGRESS

Enjoyable moment: _____

I am thankful for: _____

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DAYS 5-10

- You will likely notice significant progress during this time.
- Depending on the type of surgery, sutures or staples may be removed, and mobility will be encouraged.
- This is an important time to be gentle with yourself, remembering you're still recovering AND focusing on how you're improving at a nice pace.



TRACK YOUR PROGRESS

What improvements are you noticing? _____

What seems to be getting easier or less painful in the last few days? _____

What have you been able to enjoy about your recovery? _____

WEEKS 2-3 AND BEYOND

- Are you setting some small, achievable goals for yourself? Some people expect to feel recovered by this time, but full recovery will take a while.
- You will still need plenty of rest, but you'll also want to gradually ease back into a more active life. Plan some very gentle activities you enjoy or start going on very short walks.
- By the end of week three, you may be able to start easing back into a predictable schedule.

- ☒ Plan gentle outings with friends
- ☒ Walk around the block if you're cleared for mild exercise
- ☒ Enjoy a meal out with the family
- ☒ Before long, you'll likely start cardiac rehab



TRACK YOUR PROGRESS

Enjoyable moment: _____

I am grateful for: _____

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