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## **Surgical Support**

The immense value and miraculous impact of surgical intervention is hard to overstate. However, no matter the skill of the surgeon nor the care of the surgical team, surgery is still a significant trauma to the body. Our goal is to help your body prepare for, experience, and recover from the surgery as quickly, effortlessly, and with the best recovery of function possible.

We can divide surgical support into three phases.

### **Pre-Surgery**

Leading up to surgery the crucial factor is ensuring that all the necessary nutrients and structural building blocks are present in the body in sufficient amounts to allow for a healthy recovery. It's always better to start out with sufficient body stores of the nutrients you'll be using rather than trying to supplement them after they've already been depleted. The processes we want to support include wound healing, immune function, liver detoxification, and general body resilience. Starting at least a few weeks prior to surgery we want to add the following nutrients: Vitamin D, magnesium, zinc, silica, collagen, vitamin C, and bioflavonoid complexes. These nutrients support your surgical preparation from reducing the risk of community acquired infections like MRSA, to providing the building blocks for new skin and collagen formation and ensuring sufficient resilience to keep your body healing without stressing your body functions excessively.

Ask your surgeon if it would be beneficial to donate your blood. Fresh blood can be stored for up to 42 days in most cases. If your surgical facility can accommodate it, you might consider donating your own blood for use in your surgery 2 weeks prior to your surgical date. If you end up needing blood during your surgery they'll have it on hand. If they don't need it, your blood will be available for someone else with the appropriate blood type for several weeks after your surgery.

### **The days leading up to and the day of surgery**

In the days leading up to your surgery prepare yourself like a marathon runner does for a big race. Reduce your activity, don't stress or strain your system. Don't work out excessively or push your body into a state where it will be actively healing from anything.

Second, in the two days before your surgery, begin eating more complex carbohydrates. Have carbs for multiple meals. Grains, whole wheat pasta, oatmeal, quinoa, fruits, and starchy vegetables are good examples of healthy sources of complex carbs. Your body stores sugars in long chains called glycogen. This is stored in your liver and muscle tissue and when your body goes through a physical trauma it calls on this stored sugar to fuel the machinery of healing. Since you'll be likely fasting for 8-12 hours prior to your surgery it is important to intentionally stack up your reserves prior to your surgery.

Third, reduce your exposure to chemicals that may require additional liver detoxification. You'll be receiving a lot of different medications during your surgery that will rely on a healthy detoxification system. If you give your liver a break for a few days prior to your surgery you will have a more predictable response to the anesthesia and other medications, making your surgical team's job easier and you'll be less likely to experience side effects or post-surgical mental fog. Avoid alcohol and any recreational drugs. Ensure your diet is organic and largely plant based. Incorporate more leafy greens in your diet as well as sulphur containing veggies such as leeks, onions, garlic and shallots.

Four days prior to your surgery stop any of the following supplements if you are taking them: Fish Oil, Krill Oil, Flaxseed Oil, Cod Liver Oil, Turmeric, Ginkgo Biloba, St. John's Wort, Ginseng, Ashwagandha, Echinacea, Kava, Goldenseal, Garlic, and Saw Palmetto. The things in this list that are common food ingredients are fine to continue having in meals at the normal levels found in a typical diet.

### **Day of the surgery**

Make sure to hydrate well the night before if allowed by your surgeon. The day of your surgery spend time calmly sitting, meditating, watching the sunrise, taking a bath, whatever it is you do to slow down and get into a healing mental state. Try to stay relaxed as you head to your surgery. When you are prepped for surgery and have a chance to talk to the anesthesiologist make a very specific and detailed request. I've never heard of them minding. As long as what you're asking doesn't interfere with them doing their job they're usually more than happy to comply. Ask that they don't use something to dull you first so that you can consciously move under anesthesia from a place of centeredness and calm. Second, ask that in the moment that they do put you under that everyone busily preparing around you stops moving and talking so that you can go under with conscious control over your center in a calm relaxed state. Third, ask that they allow you to indicate when you are ready to move under the anesthesia. In that moment gather yourself and take note of the area around you. Breathe deeply to your lower abdomen and feel awareness of your breath. Move your awareness to your body, the bed, the room and the hearts of the professionals around you. Let the anesthesiologist know you're ready with a nod and move under in conscious acknowledgement of the process, granting your permission, and in preparation for moving back into consciousness in full command of yourself and of the healing ahead.

The patients that have followed this protocol have had a remarkable return to consciousness with significantly less grogginess and brain fog. Because the unconscious body does not experience the surgery as a forced trauma, the stress held in the tissue after the surgery is less and the reactive pain that can remain at surgical sites for months or years after is usually not present. When the body is calm, the processes of immune function, healing, clotting, etc all work more effectively.

### **Post surgery**

In the day following your surgery there are some specific foods that are traditionally recommended in Chinese Medicine. Assuming that there are no adverse reactions or complications that require specific recourse, nourishing the foundational energies and quantities in the body and lightly encouraging circulation is the standard protocol within Chinese Medicine.

This recipe is also used for following car accidents or other physical traumas. This should be made ahead of time and started on as soon as you return home. (In the case of hemorrhagic bleeding omit the Angelica Sinensis from this recipe)

## Angelica Sinensis Chicken Broth

Over medium/low heat saute a mixture of 1 cup each of celery, onions and carrot in olive oil till soft and lightly brown (about 30 minutes).

Add 3 cloves of crushed garlic

Saute an additional 5 minutes

Add 1 cup of white wine and 2 T white vinegar

Saute another 10 minutes till the wine is reduced by at least  $\frac{2}{3}$

Add the bones from one Chicken, or about 4 cups of bones (Chicken or turkey is best, beef or pork less so, but still helpful)

Add 6 cups of water, 5 peppercorns, 1 bay leaf, a bunch each of oregano, parsley, thyme, and rosemary. Or whatever savory herbs are available.

Add Angelica Sinensis about 2 sheets if using raw pressed pieces, (20 grams) or about 8 scoops if using 5:1 extract of granulated Angelica Sinensis (for this recipe the raw herb is recommended over any extracted version)

After 1 hour, taste and adjust the flavor with salt, oil, pepper, or additional herbs.

Continue simmering for about 5 hours or until the liquid reduces by about half.

Strain out the veggies and bones and use the broth as a drink or base for chicken soup by adding new veggies, meat, noodles, etc. Drink/eat multiple times per day for the first several days after surgery.

## Congee

Congee is a rice porridge used in Chinese culture. It consists of a base of very thoroughly cooked rice porridge to which other ingredients and flavors can be added. It replaces energy and electrolytes with absolute minimal digestive effort.

2 cups of rice

4 cups of water

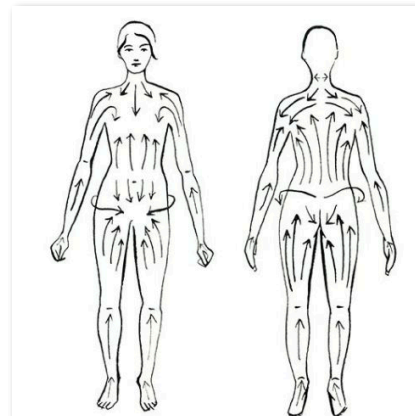
Dash of salt

Bring the water to a boil and add the rice. Reduce to simmer and cook several hours until the rice is breaking down and falling apart as you stir it. Maintain in a slow cooker for several days after the surgery to give consistent access to easily absorbed nutrients. If the water becomes too low add more water. As the amount of congee reduces add a fresh batch of rice and water and raise to a boil briefly before returning to a simmer. For flavor add sweet potatoes, green onions, ginger, garlic, soy sauce, brown sugar, raisins, chicken pieces, onion, mushrooms, leeks, or anything else that sounds good.

## Self care

### Dry Brushing

Use a loufa or natural bristle brush to move the lymphatics through the body, especially paying attention to the limb closest to the surgical site. The lymphatic vessels have one-way



valves in them. Follow the illustration to best support circulation. It would be appropriate to do this twice per day and to try and do it when your body is warm such as after a warm bath or after drinking warm fluids or soup.

## Microcosmic Orbit

The microcosmic orbit is a QiGong visualization exercise that helps to increase the energy in the body, support healing and speed recovery. It is an easy thing to do when you're laying in bed whiling away the hours and days till you're up and about again.

In this exercise you use your breath and mind to guide energy around a circuit running from your pelvis up your back over your head and back down the front midline of the body to the lower pelvis and back around. Begin by taking a deep breath to the lower belly and with the breath imagine this area filling with energy. As you exhale your air visualize the energy you breathed in staying and contracting so that by the time you've completely exhaled your breath the energy is in a ball the size of a pearl. With the next inhale guide this pearl from the perineum up the back of your body, cresting over the top of your head. As you exhale guide it down the front of your body. As it returns to the perineum you should be finishing your exhale. On the next inhale the cycle begins again. In order to connect the meridians this exercise is working on, place the tongue on the roof of the mouth just behind the front teeth and engage the muscles of the perineum to gently firm the area.

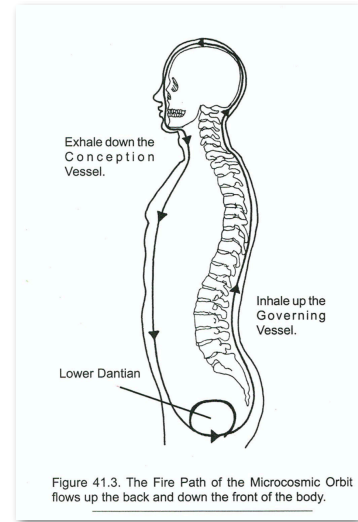


Figure 41.3. The Fire Path of the Microcosmic Orbit flows up the back and down the front of the body.

## Breath

Especially in the case of abdominal surgeries pay a lot of attention to your breath. The diaphragm, by wrapping over the top of your abdominal cavity, can exert a great deal of influence on processes happening there. The rhythmic compression and release can help to move lymph, blood, and pulse nutrients in and waste out of areas of healing. In the case of surgeries on the limbs, careful attention to breath can also diaphragmatic breathing supports both venous return and lymphatic circulation. Both of these are vital to flush toxins from the area and feed the surgical site with healthy blood and nutrients. Focussing on your breath can help to heal you faster. The reverse is also important. Following a surgery one might change the way they breath because it is painful to take a deep breath. Unfortunately, long after the pain from the surgery has resolved, the habitual change in breathing may not.

Developing the awareness and body control necessary to master diaphragmatic breathing is a matter of practice and concentration. It will take time to develop. Be patient with yourself. First, focus on the sensation of your breath coming into your nostrils and then incrementally move down. Notice the sensation in your throat, in your upper chest and so on, moving a few more inches with each inhale, until you feel the breath filling your entire chest. Next see if you can propagate that sensation further and further down by using the expansive pressure of your breath to reach the tissues of your lower ribs, of your sides, and of your belly. In really developed diaphragmatic breathing you'll be able to feel your breath in your perineum and sacrum. This type of deep and complete belly breathing is

powerfully rehabilitative to the structures of your abdominal wall, intestines, bladder, kidneys and reproductive organs. Because the diaphragm anchors to the lumbar vertebrae, it is also supportive for rehabilitating your lumbar discs. With each breath the vertebrae gently flex and bend relative to one another, pumping fluids and nutrients into your discs and helping them to stay hydrated and supple.

Play with seeing if you can expand your breath towards each direction, to the front, sides, and back, independently as well as together. Work on bringing the breath down to the lower pelvis. This breathing is also supportive for returning peristaltic function to normal following abdominal surgery.

### Peristaltic sway

This exercise is used commonly in hospitals across China for helping to return intestinal function to normal after surgery. The exercise makes use of the abdominal breathing described above, as well as a rhythmic pumping of the Large Intestine and Stomach meridians to restore peristaltic function to normal and prevent post surgical ileus (the delayed return of normal peristalsis and bowel movements after surgery).

There's a great video of this exercise done by Dr. Jason Gordon on his Youtube channel. It's called Daoist Yang Organ Tonification exercise or "swaying".

From the text on this exercise:

When the patient's arms swing rhythmically throughout the exercise, the nerves and Qi channels of the shoulder joints become stimulated. The swaying action of the arms increases the circulation in the energetic channels which connect the different internal organs and terminate at the hands.

Although this exercise is simple, the result in strengthening the body's peristaltic action and curing digestive illnesses is very effective. The patient is therefore cautioned not to eat prior to practicing this exercise.

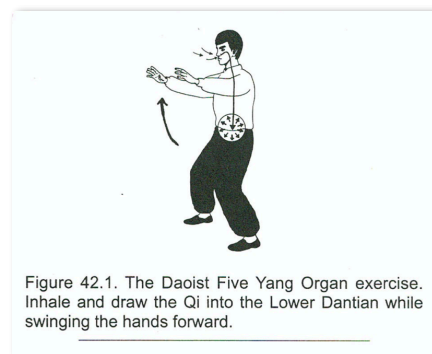


Figure 42.1. The Daoist Five Yang Organ exercise. Inhale and draw the Qi into the Lower Dantian while swinging the hands forward.

This is a good exercise to help return to more active life after surgery.

Go easy on yourself, get work done on the area as soon as pain and mobility allows and ensure you have restarted the supplements you began prior to your surgery. Acupuncture should be done within the first few days after surgery to help the body recover and heal quickly and again a few times in the following 2 weeks to help muscles return to normal functioning after the trauma of surgery.