

Enhanced Recovery After Surgery

Patient Education: Introduction



Enhanced Recovery After Surgery (called “ERAS”) is a care plan that was made for you by your UNC Surgery and UNC Anesthesiology Teams. This plan is called a clinical pathway. The pathway helps to: prepare your body for surgery, recover safely, and return home as soon as possible after your surgery.

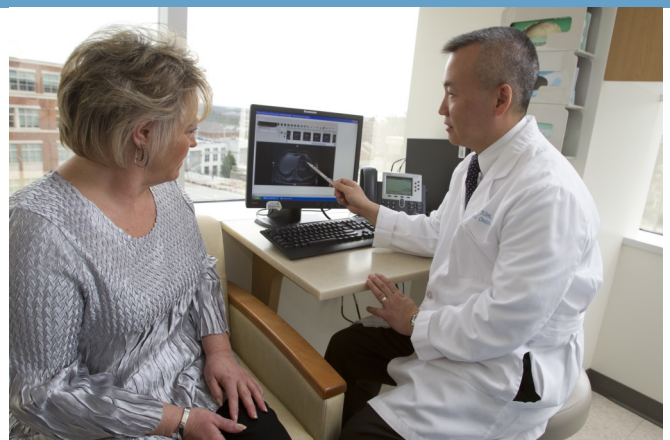
Why do we use the ERAS pathway?

The ERAS pathway helps you to recover quickly and lowers the chances of you having any problems after your surgery. This pathway helps you and your team work together to:

- Keep your hospital stay short
- Keep your pain level under control
- Help you get out of bed and walk within 24 hours
- Allow you to eat and drink as soon as it is safe for you
- Listen to your concerns and explain things clearly
- Make sure you are happy with your care at UNC

What should I expect before my surgery?

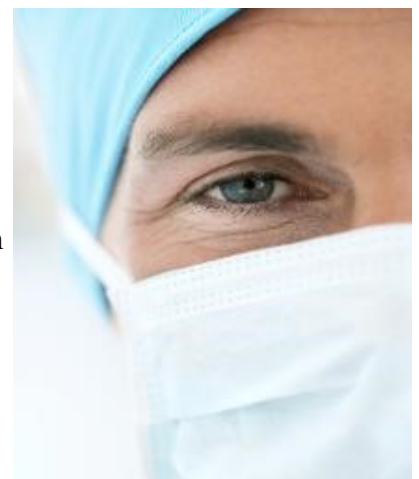
After discussing your surgery with the surgeon, a member of your surgeon’s team will talk to you about your role in the enhanced recovery pathway. Your team will also give you important details about how to prepare your body for surgery, including exercise, deep breathing, and tobacco cessation. You may be asked to drink Gatorade® before surgery. Your surgeon’s clinic nurse will provide specific details on this if needed.



On the day of surgery, a nurse will place an IV to prepare you for surgery. You may receive medications to help with inflammation and pain control prior to surgery.

What will happen in the Operating Room (OR)?

You will be carefully monitored in the OR during your surgery. A team of people including anesthesia, doctors and nurses will be watching over you at all times. This team will also be giving you medicines to keep you asleep and comfortable. Your blood pressure will be closely watched to reduce your risk for heart attack, stroke, and kidney problems. You may need medications during your surgery such as medicine to help control your blood pressure and medicines to prevent nausea after surgery. We will keep you warm during surgery with blankets, IV fluids and air warmers.



Pain Management

Enhanced Recovery After Surgery (called “ERAS”) care plans are designed to minimize negative side effects from commonly used pain medications. Side effects of these medications can lead to excessive drowsiness, confusion, delayed return of bowel function, and constipation. These side effects can lead to prolonged hospital stays and can make recovery after surgery difficult.

What medications will be used to treat my pain?

The underlying cause of pain is inflammation. Medications that treat inflammation therefore become an important part of your pain management plan. These medications may include:

- Tylenol (acetaminophen)
- Lyrica (pregabalin)
- Celebrex (celecoxib)
- Toradol (ketorolac)

Small amounts of pain medication (called opioids) may be included in your ERAS care pathway. Your surgical and anesthesia teams will work with you on which combination of medications will be best for you and your type of surgery.

Some care pathways include other pain management strategies such as:

- Local anesthetics: These are medications injected into your incision during surgery. This makes the skin and tissues feel numb for several hours. These medications are safe and do not have any major side effects.
- Epidural: You may be offered an epidural for pain control. The surgeon and anesthesiologist will discuss this option for you if it is appropriate for your type of surgery.

What will happen after my surgery?

After your surgery, you will go to the Postoperative Anesthesia Care Unit, called the PACU. PACU nurses will be with you to closely watch your vital signs (blood pressure, heart rate, and oxygen levels). Your nurses will also give you any medicines you need. Your UNC care team will update your family on how you are doing.



When you are ready, you will be moved to a post-operative surgical unit in the hospital for your recovery. It is important for you to get out of bed, sit in a chair, and walk as soon as possible. Do this as often as you can. Your nurse will help you move around safely.

If any bladder catheters or tubes are placed by the surgeon, they will be removed as soon as possible. Your UNC surgery team will tell you when you can start drinking fluids and eating solid food. Your team will tell you when it is safe for you to go home.