



Preparing for PAO Surgery

Periacetabular Osteotomy (PAO) is a major surgery that requires thoughtful preparation and planning. Being well-prepared before surgery and knowing what to expect during recovery can help reduce stress and ensure a smoother healing process. This guide outlines the steps to take before your surgery, what to expect in the hospital, and how to prepare for your recovery at home.

Before Surgery: What You Need to Know

Proper preparation before your PAO surgery can significantly impact your recovery. There are several important steps to take in the weeks leading up to surgery, ranging from medication management to preparing your home.

1. Discontinue Medications

Certain medications can increase the risk of complications during and after surgery, so it's important to follow your doctor's instructions on what to stop taking and when.

- **Birth Control:** If you're using hormonal birth control (such as pills, patches, or IUDs), you'll need to discontinue use one month before surgery. Hormonal birth control can increase the risk of developing blood clots, which is a serious post-surgical complication.
- **Anti-Inflammatories (NSAIDs):** Medications like ibuprofen, Aleve, aspirin, Motrin, Advil, and other NSAIDs can increase bleeding during surgery. Your doctor will advise you to stop taking these medications at least 7 days before surgery to reduce the risk of excessive bleeding.
- **Narcotic Pain Medications:** If you've been using narcotic painkillers such as Norco, Vicodin, or Percocet, you may be asked to gradually stop these



medications. Prolonged use of narcotics can make it harder to manage post-operative pain, as your body may develop a tolerance to them.

2. Start Taking Iron and Vitamin D Supplements

Your body will need optimal levels of nutrients to heal after surgery, so starting supplements early can help speed up recovery.

- **Iron:** Your surgeon may recommend starting over-the-counter iron supplements (ferrous sulfate) one month before surgery and continuing for two months afterward. This helps boost your red blood cell count and reduces the risk of anemia.
 - **Dosage:** Iron 65 mg (Ferrous Sulfate 325 mg) once daily.
- **Vitamin D:** Vitamin D is essential for bone healing, so taking 2000 IU of Vitamin D daily can support recovery.
- **Calcium:** 1000 mg of calcium daily can help strengthen bones as they heal after PAO surgery.

3. Set Up Your Home for Recovery

Before surgery, it's crucial to make sure your home is ready for your recovery period. Since your mobility will be limited, consider the following tips:

- **Same-Floor Setup:** Set up a comfortable recovery area where your bed and bathroom are on the same floor. This will help you avoid stairs, which can be difficult in the early stages of recovery.
- **Clear Obstacles:** Remove any tripping hazards such as loose rugs, cords, or clutter. You'll be using crutches or a walker, so having clear pathways will make moving around safer and easier.
- **Prepare Assistive Devices:** If possible, arrange for a walker, crutches, or even a raised toilet seat to make daily activities more manageable. Some patients also find it helpful to have a shower chair for bathing.



What to Bring to the Hospital

You'll likely be in the hospital for 3-5 days after surgery, so packing a few personal items can make your stay more comfortable. Here's a list of things to consider bringing:

- **Comfortable Clothing:** Bring loose-fitting clothing like athletic shorts and easy-to-put-on shoes (like slip-ons or sneakers with Velcro). You'll want clothes that are easy to move in and can accommodate bandages or swelling.
- **Entertainment:** Recovery in the hospital can be slow, so bring items to help pass the time, such as a laptop, iPad, books, or puzzles. Most hospitals have Wi-Fi, so streaming shows or listening to music can also help keep you entertained.
- **Pillow:** Some patients prefer to bring their own pillow for added comfort during their hospital stay.
- **Personal Hygiene Items:** Bring essential hygiene items like a toothbrush, toothpaste, face wipes, hairbrush, and dry shampoo to help you feel more refreshed during your stay.

In the Hospital

The day of your surgery can be both exciting and nerve-wracking, but understanding what to expect can help ease some of the stress.

Pre-Surgery

Once you arrive at the hospital, you'll go through several steps to prepare for surgery:

1. **Admission:** The hospital will notify you of your check-in time, typically the night before your surgery. Upon arrival, a nurse will check your vital signs, and you'll change into a hospital gown.
2. **Pre-Operative Holding:** You'll be taken to the pre-op area, where you'll meet your surgical team, including the anesthesiologist who will explain the anesthesia process.



3. **Anesthesia:** PAO surgery is performed under general anesthesia, meaning you'll be asleep for the entire procedure. Some patients may also receive an epidural for additional pain relief after surgery.
4. **Surgical Marking:** Your surgeon will mark the operative site on your hip, and your pre-op nurse will confirm all details before you head to the operating room.

Post-Surgery

After surgery, you'll be taken to the recovery room (post-anesthesia care unit) where nurses will monitor you as you wake up.

- **Pain Management:** You'll likely have an epidural or IV pain medications for the first 24 hours. The hospital staff will closely monitor your pain levels and ensure you're comfortable.
- **X-Rays:** After surgery, X-rays will be taken to confirm that your bones are properly aligned and that the screws are in place.
- **Mobility Assistance:** Once you're stable, a physical therapist will help you begin mobility exercises and teach you how to safely use crutches or a walker. These exercises are designed to prevent stiffness and promote blood circulation.

Going Home

After spending 3-5 days in the hospital, you'll be ready to return home. However, there are specific criteria that need to be met before you're discharged:

Discharge Criteria

1. **Walking with Crutches:** You'll need to demonstrate that you can safely walk with crutches or a walker, applying minimal weight on your operated leg.
2. **Navigating Stairs:** If your home requires you to use stairs, you must be able to navigate them with assistance.



3. **Pain Control:** Your pain should be managed with oral pain medications, and you should be comfortable enough to go home without IV medications.
 4. **Bowel Movement:** You'll need to have a bowel movement before leaving the hospital, as constipation is a common side effect of pain medications and anesthesia. Stool softeners may be given to help with this.
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After PAO: Recovery at Home

Your recovery at home will require patience and careful attention to your surgeon's instructions. Here's what to expect:

1. **Mobility:** You'll continue using crutches or a walker for at least 6-8 weeks. Initially, you'll only be allowed to put 1/6 of your body weight on the operated leg. Gradually, with the guidance of your physical therapist, you'll increase your weight-bearing capacity.
 2. **Pain Management:** At home, you'll switch to oral medications like Norco or OxyContin for pain relief. It's important to follow the prescribed dosages and avoid taking more than directed.
 3. **Physical Therapy:** Physical therapy is a crucial part of your recovery. In the early weeks, therapy will focus on gentle range-of-motion exercises to prevent stiffness. As you heal, you'll gradually move to strengthening exercises to rebuild muscle and regain full mobility.
 4. **Incision Care:** Keep your incision site clean and dry. You'll likely have dissolvable sutures or staples that will need to be removed during a follow-up visit. Keep an eye out for signs of infection, such as redness, swelling, or drainage.
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Conclusion: Preparing for a Successful Recovery



Proper preparation for PAO surgery is essential to ensure a smooth recovery. By discontinuing medications on time, taking the right supplements, setting up your home, and understanding what to expect during your hospital stay, you'll be ready for a successful outcome. Be patient with the recovery process, and follow your surgeon's advice closely to achieve the best results.

For more information on preparing for PAO surgery or to schedule a consultation, contact us at *HipPreservation.org*.