

Top Surgery Packs

We asked people in the community what they needed when they were recovering from surgery and we've done our best to research thoroughly the best ways to facilitate recovery from top surgery. However we are not medical professionals and you should always follow the advice of your surgeon. If this pack contradicts anything your surgeon has told you, always follow their advice. If in doubt, Please contact your doctor.

Good luck with your recovery from everyone at Trans Aid Cymru!

HYGIENE AND GENERAL CARE

Included in this pack:

- Baby wipes
- Deodorant
- Dry shampoo
- Reusable hot & cold pack

Maintaining hygiene is really important after surgery to help you keep your surgery site clean. It also helps to feel fresh! Though surgeons usually encourage bathing, you might find it difficult to shower, so we've included some baby wipes, deodorant and dry shampoo. We've been careful to choose products that are gentle and suitable for sensitive skin.

Please be careful when using these products not to lift your arms too high or strain yourself.

Cold packs are really good for reducing swelling and managing pain. Please follow the instructions that came with the product, don't put ice or ice-packs directly onto your skin, and don't use them for more than 20 minutes at a time.

Heat is also a really effective way of reducing pain and using your heated pack can be useful for easing any aches or strains you have in other parts of your body. However, **DO NOT USE HEAT PACKS ON YOUR SURGERY SITE.** Heat packs might temporarily relieve pain, but using heat packs on open wounds or surgery sites can cause burns underneath the skin before they are visible and could prolong recovery. Do not fall asleep when using a heat pack, as this can also cause burns.

Resting is really important for recovery, but it's also important not to spend too much time in bed. Getting mobile again after surgery is an important part of recovery, and doing some gentle movement will help prevent aches and strains that you might get from sitting in one position too long.

WOUND CARE AND SCAR HEALING

Included in this pack:

- Hibiscrub
- Surgical micropore tape
- Silicone scar sheets
- Emollient (E45)
- Moisturizer (diprobase/doublebase/hydromol)
- Coconut oil/Almond oil
- Bio-oil
- A spare post-op binder

Hibiscrub

Sanitizing your hands before you touch your surgery site or change your dressings is essential to prevent infection and ensure a speedy recovery. Don't touch your dressings or your surgery site unless instructed to do so by your surgeon, and please read the instructional leaflet before using Hibiscrub. Always follow your surgeon's instructions on how to care for your surgery site, drains, and dressings.

Micropore Tape and Silicone Scar Sheets

Putting tape over your scars can improve their appearance. Having tape over the area applies pressure to your scar as it heals and it reduces tension in the healing wound. Trials have shown that there's no significant difference between the effect of using micropore tape or silicone scar sheets, but silicone scar sheets tend to be more gentle on sensitive skin. Use whichever one you find works best for you.

If you put tape or sheets over your scars, you must **not** remove the tape daily as this could cause you to lose the top layers of skin cells which will hinder the healing process. You can keep the tape on for a week, or until it starts to peel at the edges. You can keep the tape on in the shower and should replace it about once a week. Please talk to your surgeon or a doctor about when to start using tape before you start applying it.

Emollient and Moisturizers

Gently massaging emollients and moisturizers into the surgery site and the surrounding area once it has begun to heal can help reduce scarring and help the skin heal quickly. This is usually advised at around 6 weeks post-surgery, or once the skin is no longer fragile and the redness has reduced. However, you should **always** talk to your surgeon or your doctor before applying anything to your surgery site to make sure that the treatment you are using is medically appropriate. Everyone's journey to healing is different and you should always follow the advice given to you by your care team.

Bio-Oil

Bio-Oil can also help improve the appearance of scars but it should not be used until after your wounds have fully healed.

A spare post-op binder

As your surgeon will have explained to you, a post-operative compression binder is an important part of recovery and it helps reduce swelling. Having a spare one so that you can change will help you keep them clean.

COMFORT AND CONVENIENCE

Included in this pack:

- Bendable drinking straws
- Back scratcher
- Litter-picking stick
- Long-lead phone charger
- Lap tray
- High-protein snacks
- Sweets

Though getting mobile again as soon as possible is encouraged, you may be spending a lot of time in bed and you don't want to strain or stretch reaching for things, These items can help keep you comfy during your recovery.

Straws

Staying hydrated is a really important part of recovery so bendable straws are ideal and make drinking much easier in those early days when moving might be difficult. To avoid any build up of bacteria, don't use an individual straw for more than one day.

Back-scratcher

We also know that there's nothing worse than itching somewhere that you can't easily reach, so a back scratcher can be invaluable. As always, please be careful with your arm movements after surgery and take care not to lift them above your head, which might impact the healing of your scars.

Litter picking stick and extra-long phone charger

Stretching, straining, or reaching for things could cause your wounds to open, stretch your scars, and prolong recovery. Having the things you need close by is important, but having an extra-long charger and something to grab items that are just out of reach might be useful!

Snacks

Eating lots of protein and fibre is important, but so is enjoying yourself and having some treats to cheer you up, a good stash of snacks can help keep you going!

BEDDING AND CLOTHES

Included in this pack:

- Travel pillow (neck pillow)
- Wedge pillow
- V-shaped pillow
- 4 pillowcases for the V-shaped pillow
- 2 button-up shirts
- 1 zip-up hoodie

Pillows

As you will be spending a lot of time resting, and you can't sleep on your side or front, pillows are important! A Neck-pillow (travel pillow) for neck support, a wedge pillow to help keep your torso elevated if you need it, and a V-shaped pillow. As hygiene is really important in recovery, we recommend getting around 4 pillow-cases for the V-shaped pillow so that you can change them regularly.

We recommend putting a bed sheet or large pillow case around your wedge pillow and changing it regularly so that it remains clean. Using white pillowcases and sheets will help you see sweat marks and any blood stains sooner.

Shirts and hoodie

Things that button-up at the front are also a life-saver during recovery as you want to avoid lifting your arms above your head as much as possible.

If you get any blood on clothes or bedding, soak it in **cold** salt water. Once the stain is faded it can go on a regular cycle in the washing machine. If you get any other stains on your bedding or clothes, such as oil, sweat, ointments, or bodily fluids, oxy powders like Vanish are really good for removing stains.

OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES

You can find more information on top surgery recovery in these NHS leaflets and webpages:

NHS Wales Leaflet	NHS Information Webpage	VeryWellHealth Advice Page	Praxies blog post about top surgery experiences
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