

A GUIDE FOR YOUR UPCOMING ENDOMETRIOSIS SURGERY

Plus Packing Lists & Tips



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AN INTEGRATIVE APPROACH

*LINKS MAY ONLY WORK WHEN VIEWED FROM A COMPUTER

A little about my healing story:



I had severe, uncontrolled endometriosis from the moment I started my menstrual cycle. From the age of 13 until 22 I managed it in every single way possible while avoiding surgery. Simply put, it was life-altering. Endometriosis dictated so much of my life. As the disease progressed I had no choice but to seek out surgery in order to try and reclaim my life again.

In 2015 I had my first wide-excision laproscopic surgery with a renowned endometriosis specialist. The surgery ultimately eliminated SOME pain (the pain going down into my legs, radiating into my ribs, and across my back) but it did not change my debilitating menstrual pain. I spent several years pursuing more alternative methods to combating my pain - all with no avail. I found another renowned specialist who told me, essentially, my endometriosis was mild and treated me dismissively. I was crushed. I knew something was VERY wrong. I KNEW my organs were stuck together. I could feel it. The pain was unimaginable.

I ultimately decided to return to my first surgeon as he knew my case. He knew what didn't work, and we came up with a plan to combat this differently this time. He took the time to listen, he didn't dismiss me, he made me feel like there was hope. We decided to include a conservative presacral neurectomy and left ovary removal - something I did not take lightly. I just knew that I was not going to do a surgery for the 3rd time, so I wanted to 'get it right' this time around.

At 28 years old I had my 2nd wide excision laparoscopic surgery. Healing was an incredibly slow process but with that said - this is the first time in my entire life that I have ZERO endometriosis pain. NONE AT ALL. I cried tears of joy, tears of sadness, I mourned, I celebrated. And now I'm living life for all those years I've lost. I tell my [full story on YouTube](#) if you want to check it out!

Oh - and guess what? My bladder and uterus WAS fused together by endometriosis adhesions. So ladies, IF YOU KNOW SOMETHING ISN'T RIGHT - Guess What? - YOU'RE RIGHT. Trust your instincts. Find a doctor who BELIEVES you. I can't emphasize that enough.

I didn't have a guide going into surgery and I wish I did. So much about the process surprised me, or shocked me. I belonged to so many support groups but THIS, a guide, was missing. I pray this makes your process easier, that you know what to expect from this and you feel like I'm holding your hand through it. Because, energetically, I am. I'm right here with you girl.



Two Months Prior to Surgery:

ANTI-INFLAMMATORY DIET, GUT & ADRENAL SUPPORT

Leading up to surgery you want to bring as much inflammation down as possible. Your body works as a whole system, not in parts. The healthier you are, the better your recovery you will have, assuming no unforeseen complications.

MAKE TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

Book your hotel, air travel & rental car if applicable.

SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT WITH YOUR LOCAL DOCTOR OR SURGEON

Call your surgeon and find out when he/she will want you to have a follow up with your local doctor for your post operative examination of the sutures. Then go ahead and make that appointment in advance.

SECURE TIME OFF WORK

Make sure you request enough time off work for the procedure and to heal. If you can avoid going back immediately, I would.

BASELINE HORMONE TESTING

It's important to know where your hormone levels are prior to surgery as they may change after. If you're working with an integrative practitioner as part of your team (I highly encourage this) they will be able to support your overall body in regulating your hormones. My preferred method for this is with DUTCH testing.

DETERMINE WHO WILL BE YOUR CARETAKER

This is going to be the person who takes you to your appointments, helps you ask questions to better understand the process, will advocate on your behalf, will be there for you during the surgery, and who you can fully count on to take care of you post surgery. This may be a parent, partner, spouse, relative or friend.

It is important that they understand and can anticipate your needs during this time.

Anti-Inflammatory Diet

ELIMINATE

- Dairy
- Gluten
- Highly processed foods
- Factory farmed meat (these will come from the grocery store)
- Sugary drinks like soda or sports drinks
- Products made with carrageenan

REDUCE

- Caffeine
- Alcohol
- Red meat
- Eggs
- Soy

INCREASE

- Foods high in Omega 3's
- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Organic pasture raised poultry & meat
- Nuts & seeds

Recommendations for pasture raised, healthy poultry & meat:

[MOINK](#) (\$20 off with that link)

[WHITE OAK PASTURES](#)

Gut Support

It is important to make sure your gut biome is healthy and well balanced since endometriosis surgery takes a toll on the gastrointestinal system. Many probiotic strains produce histamine – this is something you absolutely need to avoid as histamine is very inflammatory. I recommend getting on [Probiota Histamin X probiotic](#) by Seeking Health two months prior to your surgery, and continue with it after your surgery to help rebalance your microbiome.

Adrenal Support

Chronic stress – whether that is emotional or physical from something like pain, causes a major strain on the adrenals. The adrenal glands are part of a complex system called the HPA axis which help regulates hormones, neurotransmitters, ability to handle stress, alertness and so much more. Chronic bloating can actually stem from adrenal dysfunction! Surgery is very stressful on your body – if your adrenals are already burnt out it's going to take a much larger toll. I recommend starting [Seeking Health Optimal Adrenal](#) or Gaia's [daily](#) & [nightly](#) adrenal support formulas.



HOW LONG SHOULD YOU BOOK YOUR STAY?

Your surgeon should be able to give you a guideline on how long you'll need to stay. From experience, I've had to be there a minimum of two days before the surgery to meet with the surgeon, do the physical exam and the pre-op labs. The day before the surgery you'll want to stay in to do the bowel prep. I stayed 6 day post op before flying back home. My motto was, 'I'd rather over book and not need the extra time, then cut it short and dread returning home too soon'.

HOTEL / TRAVEL

TRAVELING FOR ENDOMETRIOSIS SURGERY IS VERY COMMON

ROOM REQUESTS

- Book a room with a kitchenette, this will be important for making tea, having space to manage medication if needed and a designated space for take-out.
- Request a room near an entrance so you have easy access when you get back from the hospital.

MEDICAL DISCOUNTS

- Many hotels have special pricing for medical stays. Ask your surgeon for a list of recommended hotels, when you call make sure to ask about medical pricing.

AIR TRAVEL

- When you check in to the airport make sure you tell the ticket counter you need priority boarding due to medical. This way you can board first, won't be rushed and you'll get the seats in the front of the plane with ample leg room.





ITS BETTER TO
HAVE THEM
AND NOT NEED
THEM, THEN TO
NEED THEM
AND NOT HAVE
THEM.

Medications

GET YOUR MEDS FILLED PRIOR TO
SURGERY

Your surgeon will send you off with a prescription after your surgery. TRUST ME - you do not want to be waiting in the car while the pharmacist fills your prescription post surgery.

Ask your surgeon for any prescriptions before the day of surgery so you can pick them up beforehand.





Bowel Prep

WILL I NEED A BOWEL PREP?

Most endometriosis specialists will require you to do a bowel prep the day before surgery in case you have any endometriosis on the bowels that needs to be excised. Endometriosis on the bowels is very common due to the proximity.

WHAT DOES IT ENTAIL?

Typically it involves a liquid diet the afternoon prior to your surgery, along with dulcolax tablets (stool softeners) and miralax mixed in soda or a sports drink (as long as it's not red). You will get detailed instructions from your surgeon.

PRO TIP

Sports drinks are loaded with synthetic chemicals, artificial sweeteners / flavors and dyes. They are pro-inflammatory and not conducive to healing. Before a surgery you want to do everything in your power to promote a state of wellbeing. Instead of your traditional sports drinks, mix your miralax into something healthier like:

- [Coconut Water \(high in electrolytes\)](#)
- [Roar Organic Electrolyte Infusions](#)
- [Nooma Organic Electrolyte Sports Drink](#)

Other liquids to have on hand:

- [Zevia Soda](#) - ginger ale helps with the nausea you may get from drinking the miralax
- Healthy fruit popsicles (read the labels!) - avoid carrageenan
- Clear broths / Jello
- Sucking candies - not red (as long as your surgeon approves)

*Most of these you can find at your local health food store / Whole Foods

REMINDER

Being health conscious is NOT extreme. By doing this you are making the best choices to support your body before it goes through a traumatic experience. Surgery is difficult on the body, you will be given so many medications that your body has to work hard to filter out. Doing everything you can to ease the burden on your body will help support you in the best ways possible.



What your caretaker will need at the hospital

- WARM SWEATER / BLANKET
- PHONE CHARGER
- BOOK / LAPTOP / SOME FORM OF ENTERTAINMENT
- SNACKS
- WATER
- A BIG TOTE BAG TO HOLD THE THINGS YOU NEEDED TO BRING WITH YOU TO THE HOSPITAL

What you'll need at the hospital

PEPPERMINT ESSENTIAL OIL (NON SYNTHETIC, PURE THERAPEUTIC GRADE)

THIS WILL HELP WITH NAUSEA, HEADACHES AND SHOULDER PAIN FROM THE GAS POST SURGERY. SNIFF IT / APPLY TOPICALLY AS NEEDED. BRAND & QUALITY IS SUPER IMPORTANT - [LEARN MORE.](#)

GRANNY PANTIES (WITH SEAM THAT SITS *JUST BELOW OR ABOVE* BELLY BUTTON)

PANTIES WILL MAKE OR BREAK YOUR DISCOMFORT LEVELS POST SURGERY. BIKINI SYTLE PANTIES WILL SIT OVER YOUR LOWEST INCISION AND THEREFORE CAN NOT BE WORN.

ORGANIC NON BLEACHED MAXI PADS & PANTY LINERS

IT'S IMPORTANT TO REDUCE CHEMICAL EXPOSURE SO DO NOT BUY TRADITIONAL OR FRAGRANCE SCENTED PADS. YOU'LL NEED BOTH [HEAVY / EXTRA LONG PADS](#) & [PANTY LINERS](#) FOR POST SURGERY BLEEDING THAT MAY OCCUR.

SLIP ON SHOES TO LEAVE THE HOSPITAL IN

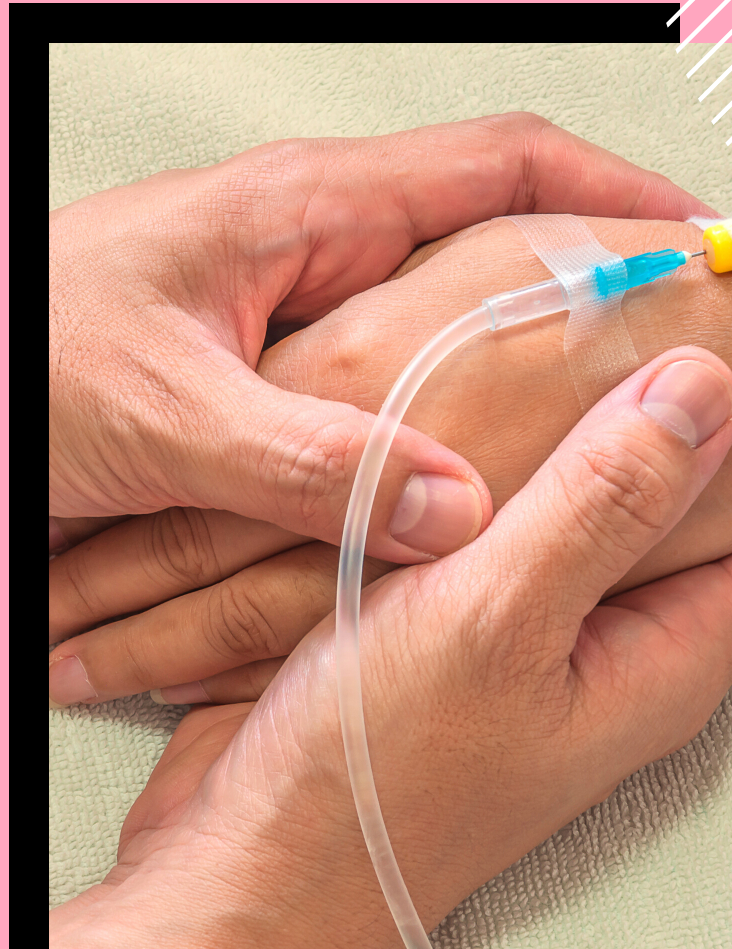
BENDING OVER WILL BE A CHALLENGE, SO SLIP ONS WILL BE YOUR BFF. I PERSONALLY LOVE CROCS AND HAVE NO SHAME IN IT!

MAXI DRESSES / T-SHIRT DRESSES

THESE WILL ALSO BECOME YOUR NEW BFF

GLASSES > CONTACTS

NOW IS NOT THE TIME FOR VANITY. LEAVE YOUR MAKEUP AT HOME AND DITCH THE CONTACTS FOR GLASSES.



What to expect day of surgery



PRO TIP

MAKE SURE THE NIGHT BEFORE SURGERY YOU WASH AND DRY YOUR HAIR. YOU'RE NOT GOING TO BE UP TO DOING SO AFTER THE SURGERY AND MAY NOT FEEL UP FOR IT FOR A FEW DAYS.

SHOWERING BEFORE SURGERY

BEFORE SURGERY YOU WILL NEED TO WASH YOUR BODY WITH AN ANTIBACTERIAL BODY BAR (DIAL MAKES THESE, YOU CAN GET THEM AT THE GROCERY STORE IN THE BODY WASH SECTION). MAKE SURE TO THOROUGHLY WASH YOUR BODY BUT DO NOT USE THIS TO CLEAN VAGINALLY AS THAT WILL PROMOTE AN ENVIRONMENT FOR A YEAST INFECTION.

UPON ARRIVING AT THE HOSPITAL

YOUR NURSE WILL SET YOU UP WITH YOUR IV LINE AND DISCUSS WITH YOU THE PROCESS FOR THE DAY. HE/SHE IS GOING TO BE YOUR GO-TO PERSON SO MAKE SURE YOU'RE COMFORTABLE WITH HIM/HER, KNOW HIM/HER BY NAME, AND ASK ANY QUESTIONS THAT MAY ARISE.

PRO TIP

- ASK YOUR SURGEON IN ADVANCE IF YOU CAN LISTEN TO MUSIC DURING YOUR SURGERY. I DID THIS IN BOTH OF MY SURGERIES. I PUT A PLAYLIST OF MY FAVORITE ARTIST ON. STUDIES SHOW YOU CAN HEAR DURING SURGERY, EVEN IF YOU CAN'T RECALL WHAT WAS SAID - SO I ALWAYS ADVOCATE FOR MUSIC DURING SURGERY. LET YOUR NURSE KNOW SO WHEN YOU GET ON THE TABLE THEY CAN HELP YOU GET YOUR EARBUDS IN.
- I KNOW THIS SOUNDS SILLY - BUT WHEN YOU'RE IN SURGERY ALL OF YOUR GUARDS COME DOWN. THE ORGANS ARE SPONGES FOR EMOTIONAL ENERGY. IT'S IMPORTANT TO TELL THE SURGICAL TEAM THAT YOU REQUEST A POSITIVE, UPBEAT ATTITUDE AND ABSOLUTELY NO FIGHTING DURING YOUR SURGERY. TRUST ME - THEY'VE HEARD CRAZIER.

THE ANESTHETIST WILL COME & TALK WITH YOU

HE/SHE WILL ASK YOU A LIST OF QUESTIONS ABOUT REACTIONS TO ANESTHESIA AND IF YOU ARE PRONE TO NAUSEA (IF SO THEY WILL GIVE YOU AN EAR PATCH SO YOU DON'T WAKE UP SO NAUSEOUS).

PRE SURGERY ANXIETY

IF YOU'RE FEELING EXTREMELY ANXIOUS, LET THEM KNOW AND THEY WILL GIVE YOU AN ANTI-ANXIETY MEDICATION IN YOUR IV TO CHILL YOU OUT. I'VE HAD THIS WITH BOTH SURGERIES AND IT REALLY DOES HELP.

WHEN THEY WHEEL YOU BACK

IT CAME AS A SHOCK TO ME THAT WHEN THEY WHEEL YOU INTO THE OPERATING ROOM THEY ASK YOU TO GET UP AND **LAY ON THE METAL** TABLE THAT YOU'LL BE OPERATED ON!! I WAS SHOCKED... IT SEEMED SO BARBARIC! I MEAN, I KNEW I'D GET ON THE TABLE SOMEHOW I JUST DIDN'T REALIZE IT'D BE DOING IT MYSELF! JUST KNOW THIS IS COMING (HENCE WHY THAT ANTI-ANXIETY MED WAS A GOOD IDEA).

Immediately Post Surgery

WAKING UP

Waking up you may feel groggy and disoriented. You may ask if you had surgery already since it may seem like no time has passed! You'll doze in and out of sleep initially. Eventually the nurses will encourage you to get up. The sooner you start walking around, the sooner they can get you out of the hospital. This is a good thing, trust me! Healing will occur once you leave the hospital and are able to rest, move and eat normal foods.

URINATING

I won't lie - this is by far the worst part about surgery. You can't leave until you pee - and little did I know your bladder 'falls asleep' with the anesthesia and you have to 'coax' yourself into urinating. I literally sat on the toilet crying, tears streaming down my face as I said "what if I can never pee again?!" I was so panicked. Eventually you will pee. I promise. It may take a couple hours, but it'll happen. Continuously sit on the toilet - run the tap water, massage / stroke your coccyx (it can help stimulate urination). You can also place a few drops of [peppermint essential oil](#) into the toilet water. The vapor from the oil will contact the perineum to increase urine flow.



GAS PAIN

Gas pain is a WHOLE other beast. During surgery they pump you full of gas to inflate your abdominal cavity. As it is working its way out of your body it feels sharp and tight. I felt mine mostly in my back, shoulders and lungs. My belly was swollen, bloated and tender but my gas pain wasn't localized to my belly. It was uncomfortable taking deep breaths, laughing or moving too quickly. The best remedy for gas pain is [charcoal capsules](#) (drink lots of water as they can be binding), [GasX](#) is also a good option. Drinking [organic peppermint tea](#) will also help with the gas pain.

GENERAL PAIN

You may be uncomfortable, sore, heavy & fuzzy. They most likely gave you IV pain meds before you woke up. If you have pain upon waking they will give you pain medication. When I asked my surgeon if I'd be in pain upon waking he sort of laughed and said **"Women with endometriosis experience such tremendous pain on a regular basis that this will be nothing for you".**

He was 100% right.

Note: the less pain medication you're on, the faster your recovery will be.

Day 1 Post Surgery

JUST KEEP WALKING!

It's extremely important to get up and walk after your surgery. This will help prevent blood clots from forming. My surgeon told me I couldn't over do it - so keep getting up and walking.

Every 30 minutes I'd walk up and down the hotel hallways during waking hours. Moving also helps with the gas pain and elimination.

BLEEDING

You may experience some blood and bloody discharge after the surgery, this is normal. In some cases if there is a rapid change in hormones (such as with an ovary removal) you may even have a period a few days post op.

CONSTIPATION

Constipation is expected after surgery. DO NOT take a laxative. This is something your doctor will elaborate on. Instead, walk as much as you can to 'get things moving', drink plenty of fluids and eat foods that will help promote bowel movements like [prunes](#). I started having bowel movements about 4 days after surgery however it took about 2-3 months for things to fully return to 'my normal'



Packing List

CLOTHING:

- Loose fitting sweat pants
- Easy to put on bras
- Baggy T-Shirts
- Granny panties
- Maxi dresses / T-Shirt Dresses

TOLIETRIES

- Organic Non Bleached [maxi pads](#) & [panty liners](#)
- Antibacterial body wash
- Bath products: shampoo, conditioner, body wash
- Toothpaste / Toothbrush
- Any desired skincare and haircare products: for me this was body moisturizer, face wash and face cream. I did not wear makeup or do my hair during this trip
- Hair brush
- Deodorant

WELLBEING SUPPORT

- [Charcoal Capsules](#) or [GasX](#)
- [Organic peppermint tea](#)
- [Probiota Histamin X probiotic](#)
- [Arnica homeopathic pellets for pain](#)
- [Washable electric heating pad](#)
- Specific bowel prep ingredients as desired (see bowel prep page for more details)
- [Prunes](#)

ENTERTAINMENT

- Books / Kindle
- Laptop & Charger
- Phone Charger

MISC.

- Special Pillow / Body Pillow if desired
- [Sit up pillow](#) (for me, sitting up was the most comfortable position)

PACK LIGHT! YOU'RE NOT GOING TO NEED A LOT OF STUFF AND YOUR CARETAKER WILL HAVE TO CARRY YOUR THINGS AND THEIR THINGS ON THE TRAVEL HOME.



Take Time to Heal

HEALING LOOKS
DIFFERENT FOR
EVERYONE

Healing varies based on many factors such as the intensity of your surgery and how long you've been chronically ill. For some, you may feel great in a couple weeks, for others – months. The important thing to remember is you're healing and this process can not be rushed or judged. Honor your body. Love your body. Thank it for being strong. ***You. Will. Heal.*** Be patient and honor where you're at.

Your surgeon will give you guidelines regarding going back to work, driving and sexual activity – make sure to take those guidelines seriously.

Managing Expectations



It is possible that your symptoms are completely alleviated with the surgery.

In some cases women may need more than one surgery - I pray for you that is not the case.

Many women only need one. If you continue to have symptoms after surgery to a degree where your life is negatively impacted, you may need to discuss with your surgeon why this is and come up with a plan. Don't forget, you have been living with chronic symptoms and sometimes it takes your body time to readjust. Consistent acupuncture and yoga have both been used as effective ways to bring down chronic pain, stress levels and promote healing. You may also need some physical therapy or chiropractic care.

If things do not seem right - do not hesitate to investigate further. You know your body better than anyone else.

The EMOTIONAL side to healing

HEALING IS A FUNNY THING

After your surgery a large part of healing will be emotional. If you have experienced severe pain with your endometriosis, you may be in a constant state of 'anticipating' pain. You will need to retrain your brain, so to speak. This means learning how to trust your body, learning how to anticipate good things, and learning how to feel safe in your body.

There are many ways to support this process: prayer, meditation, yoga, acupuncture, talk therapy, neurofeedback, the Dynamic Neural Retraining System program, practicing gratitude, *learning how to have fun again* and spending more joyous moment with friends and loved ones.



MOURNING

The thing no one prepares you for...

ONCE YOU'VE HEALED

You may find yourself mourning a loss. The loss of you. This may be the first time in a decade that you're finally feeling GOOD! But yet... inside you're sad, broken and hurt.

These are all normal feelings. For me, I didn't know a life without pain. Everything in my life was situated around Endometriosis. It had it's hands wrapped around my relationships, my career, things as simple as making plans and leaving the house... but it also did something worse. It destroyed many of my dreams. When you finally live a life without those restraints you may be hit with the realization of how much life you LOST because of Endometriosis. Now that you see how good life can be, you reflect back on your years of struggle with heartbreak.

Who would you have been without Endometriosis? What would you have accomplished?

Do not try to suppress these feelings or talk your way out of them. You survived something really hard, and there is trauma with that. Feel this. Allow it to work through you. Honor these emotions.



Celebrating



It's time to live big.
To honor YOU.

What do you want to
do with your life
now that
Endometriosis is no
longer holding you
back?

I want you to HAVE
FUN because for so
long, you have
suffered.

ABOUT

Juliann Abecassis is an Acupuncture Physician, the clinic director at Balanced Healing of Jacksonville & the creator of Simple Mindful Living: a platform for simplified health & wellness information.



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