

## **Speedy Recovery: Healing From Injury, Surgery, or Other Trauma**

This subject is near and dear to my heart after both a recent injury and surgery that affected my back, abdomen and nervous system. It was a true test of my knowledge of how to repair the body, my willingness to get the help I needed, and my patience (with which I am not that blessed)! I admit that I had moments that I thought I would never get better and had pain so severe that I had to use prescription painkillers. Given my natural aversion to drugs, this was a big deal for me! The good news is that I am feeling much better and nutrition and supplements were a crucial part of my healing process. After my own experience I want to pass on what I have learned. If you have experienced any trauma to the body, including surgery, an injury, or just prolonged stress that has affected your physical health, there is something here for you.

The most surprising part of this whole process has been all of the ancillary issues I had to deal with due to the surgery. First there was the pain in my throat from the trache tube—slippery elm lozenges got rid of that in a snap. Then there was the pain from the catheter—the perfect job for marshmallow root. For laparoscopic surgery they pump you full of CO2 gas. You can suffer the discomfort of that for a week or you can take fennel tincture to get rid of it in a couple days. The brain fog was the worst. I couldn't call up words, forgot what I was saying mid-sentence, and was overall just dull-witted! Needless to say that was kind of frightening and was aggravated by the pain meds I had been on. No loss, though, because I was able to try PQQ, a nutrient from which three recent studies have shown positive effects on the brain. I used 60 mg of CoQ10 and 20 mg of PQQ with great results! It took about a month, but definitely got my marbles back!

I would love to say that there is an herb or combination of herbs that will alleviate severe pain but if there is I don't know about it. Before I had the surgery I was in so much pain that I had to take the pain meds. The goal, of course, is to use them as little as possible and get off of them as quickly as possible. The brain fog, damage to the stomach lining, and potential for addiction argue for using them wisely.

### **The Acute Phase**

Immediately after trauma, the body responds with inflammation. The homeopathic remedy arnica, 200 CK or above, works really well to minimize inflammation and swelling at the time of the injury or surgery. I took arnica 200 ck the day before and the morning of my surgery, as well as for 4-5 days after. This works amazingly well for pain too. After my surgery, I only had to use the pain meds a couple of times. If the injury or surgery affects any area that is nerve-rich such as the back, the eyes, the hands or feet, then alternate the arnica with hypericum. Hypericum will assist in nerve healing. Healing of the nerves can also be accomplished with the B vitamins, particularly B12 and benfotiamine (B1). When bone is involved, use the cell salts Calc Phos, Calc Flor and Silica internally to heal the bone.

Proteolytic enzymes, taken between meals, are essential to quelling the inflammatory response. These enzymes, if taken with a meal, will be used to digest your food. If taken between meals, they will actually help your body "digest" inflammatory substances. These enzymes should be taken several times per day for 2-3 days after the initial trauma. I don't recommend enzymes when the injury or surgery involves the digestive tract. The tract will need to be healed before the use of enzymes is advisable. Also, you may want to avoid these if you been on pain meds for a while. The idea is to use them instead of the pain meds, if possible. There are many herbs that quell inflammation including turmeric, boswellia, ginger, and cayenne pepper. Bioflavonoids can also reduce inflammation. These can be found separately or in combination formulas.

Vitamins A, C, & E are very important to healing tissue, including the skin. Sea buckthorn is high in these vitamins, and also adds the benefit of omega-7 for healing the internal and external "skin". Add sea buckthorn for speedy healing of incisions and any damage done to tissue by surgical instruments. Vitamin E can help prevent excess scar tissue.

Quality protein is important when healing from an injury or surgery. Proteins are used for the manufacture of new tissue, repair of old tissue, making hormones and making the enzymes necessary for body

processes. Whey protein powder is perfect for building muscle as it is high in the branched chain amino acids, which are used for this purpose. It also has immune-building benefits so can keep your immunity up while you are rehabilitating. There are also vegan proteins that contain soy, brown rice, hemp protein, cranberry protein, pea protein, or some combination of these that are good sources.

Omega-3s in the form of fish oil, a multivitamin, and a probiotic are base nutrients that will assist the body in repair. A multi will assure that you have a base level of nutrients like Vitamin D and zinc that help with healing. Omega-3s will help with cell renewal and repair, and probiotics will replace the good bacteria depleted by any antibiotics. They will also prevent illness while you recover. I personally did a healing shake every morning and here is the recipe:

2 scoops whey protein  
1 oz sea buckthorn juice by Genesis  
1/2 c. raspberries, cherries, beets or strawberries (good for blood building)  
1 c. organic coconut water  
5 large ice cubes  
2 tsp Udo's oil (for omega fats, optional if doing fish oil separately)  
2 tsp powdered Vitamin C by Healthforce  
Handful of greens (spinach, arugula, or kale)  
¼ avocado  
Local honey to taste

Add to a blender and blend away!

And last of all REST. Any injury or surgery is a trauma to the body and trying to “power through” will not do you any favors. You will do yourself more harm than good if you try to get up and about too soon. Putting pressure on the affected area will cause more swelling and inflammation and will use the energy that your body could devote to healing.

### **The Sub-Acute Phase**

After 3 days it is time to move around a little more. Doing some movement will help the lymph system to clear toxins and get circulation flowing to the affected areas. Move in any way that you are able, even if it means just circling your hands and feet while laying down. Continue with anti-inflammatory herbs and arnica. For an injury where connective tissue is involved, take a supplement that supports the regeneration of that tissue. Several are available, but look for these ingredients: UC-II type collagen, amino acids proline, lysine, and glycine, vitamin C, MSM, manganese, turmeric, glucosamine and chondroitin, and silica.

A B-complex will assist in the digestion of food and make sure you have adequate energy reserves to do the work of healing. It will help repair any nerves that were damaged in the injury or surgery. It also helps the body recover from the stress of the trauma and any worry you have about not being able to perform your regular duties. Continue the multi, the omega-3, and the probiotics. This basic nutrition will ensure that the body has a base level of all the nutrients you need to get better.

If you can get out of the house I highly recommend doing acupuncture, reiki, or other energy treatment. These treatments can help the body get back into balance, which is crucial to overall healing. If you have a chiropractor that uses kinesiology, laser treatment, or other non-invasive method that is helpful too. Don't consider these things a luxury. Proper healing from injury or surgery prevents re-injury, excessive scar tissue, and ultimately, expensive medical bills down the road. I ran into a friend the other day that is having a second abdominal surgery because the scar tissue from the first surgery has wrapped around her intestines, causing a narrowing and the need for more surgery. If it's not covered by your insurance do it anyway. You are worth it!

Once you are back to work, make sure you get adequate rest in the evening. It's amazing what your kids can and will do when you really need them to help out (this includes your husband too). It is tempting to

overdo, considering all of the things that are left undone while you are convalescing. Resist the temptation!

### **Maintenance and Well Care**

After 2-3 weeks of doing the above you should feel quite good. At this time, you will probably be allowed to get back into the water. Since water is the nurturing element it is amazing for healing. The single most helpful thing I did to calm my nervous system and allow me to move without pain was to go in a warm water therapy pool. Evanston Athletic Club has one, as does the Park Center in Glenview and Galter Life Center on the north side of the city. These pools are heated to 102 degrees, so will keep the muscles relaxed. At first all I could do was float and do very gentle movements, but within a couple weeks I could exercise in the water. The water supports you so that you can do what you could never dream of doing on land. If there was some emotional trauma associated with your accident/injury, then you might want to check out a therapy called Watsu. A practitioner does guided movements with you in the water and it is very nurturing and calming. If you can't get out to a warm water pool then take a bath. Just relaxing in the tub will do wonders for your healing.

When we are injured or have surgery we tend to compensate with body movements that avoid pain to the affected area. This puts the musculoskeletal system out of balance. A chiropractor can be very helpful in re-balancing these compensations so that we don't continue to use muscles in an unnatural way, potentially causing re-injury down the road. In my own case, I had been compensating for a long period of time due to two past injuries. In addition to chiropractic work I had to retrain my core, which I am still working on as we speak. It involved doing micro-movements called somatics. Basically, you have to re-teach the brain the correct movement. Make sure you work with someone that has an excellent knowledge of the muscle structure, compensating patterns that are common after certain injuries, and ways to retrain the body that prevent you from "cheating" and repeating the incorrect movements. I highly recommend Cindy at Fitness Defined. After just 3 weeks I have made so much progress.

Do any kind of exercise that your injury allows—walking, yoga, bike riding or swimming. Start slow and be okay with the fact that it may take months to get back to what you could do before. Heaven Meets Earth and One 2 One Yoga, both here on Central Street, have restorative yoga classes with very gentle, supported movements. This is great for stress relief and giving the body some movement without stress on the joints. David from One 2 One has a great knowledge of the muscles and has been very helpful to me.

Continue with the basic nutrition and focus on joint repair, reducing scar tissue, and any leftover inflammation. I found that once I began exercising more that the tissue in the area of the surgery would get inflamed and very hard. Homeopathic silica is useful for breaking up scar tissue. Topically, I used arnica and Traumeel on the affected area. Traumeel has homeopathic remedies for connective tissue, swelling and inflammation, and even bone. I also used anti-inflammatory herbs and nutrients like ginger, turmeric, boswellia, quercetin, and cayenne. Ginger is a personal favorite because it also promotes circulation, prevents colds & flu, and aids in digestion. It is a great add to a smoothie as well.

Once you are feeling really well think about doing a detoxification program. These programs last 10-21 days and are important for cleaning out all of the toxins in the body that can occur with injury and/or surgery. The body naturally produces free radicals and other toxic chemicals as we heal and we also want to remove any prescription drugs left in the system. By improving the functioning of the liver, we can ensure a full return to health. We happen to have a group detox starting on June 9<sup>th</sup> (2 classes). Check out our events section for more details.

If you have specific questions, or would like to have a plan in place for an upcoming surgery, I do individual consultations with clients. I am especially adept at helping with trauma to the back and abdominal area. If you just have simple questions you are welcome to talk with me in the store as well. Good luck for a speedy recovery!

