

Top Surgery Preparation Guide

Multi-Specialty Transitions Department – NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

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Oakland MST Department
(510) 752-7149



Northern California KP Surgeons and Departments:* (Contact Surgery Department directly for scheduling and post-op care questions)

Richmond Plastic Surgery: 510-307-2450
Dr. Rose Fu, Dr. Trang Nguyen, Dr. Benjamin Hornik, Dr. Karen Yokoo

Sacramento Plastic Surgery: 916-973-5515
Dr. Ken Phillips, Dr. Alex Facque

San Francisco Gender Pathways Clinic: 415-833-8735
Dr. Winnie Tong, Dr. Derek Ulvila, Dr. Roderick Simonds

San Jose Plastic Surgery: 408-972-6010
Dr. Edward Kobraei, Dr. Keith Follmar

San Rafael Plastic Surgery: 415-444-2633
Dr. Kyle Belek, Dr. Hop Le

Santa Rosa Plastic Surgery: 707-566-5288
Dr. Erica Lin, Dr. Robert Neumann

Stockton Plastic Surgery: 209-735-4370
Dr. Brad Nanigian

**Surgeons may operate at different facilities, depending on OR availability*

Surgery Preparation Checklist

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Appointment and Contact Information

(Login to KP.org for updated information)

Surgeon's Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

Pre-Op Appointment Date/Time: _____

Surgery Date/Time: _____

Post-Op Appointment Date/Time: _____

Care Planning

Employment

- Notify employer 30-60 days before surgery date
- Apply for FMLA with employer
- Apply for SDI Online
Submit online application 0-49 days after surgery
- Obtain documentation from KP Release of Medical Records Department: *"medically necessary surgery"*

Cost

- Confirm share of cost with Member Services
- Plan for covering cost of living while out of work

Caregivers

- Ask people to help you with your recovery
- Confirm caregivers' roles and your expectations
- Budget for \$50-\$100 in post-op supplies

Meal and Chore Planning

- Meal/hydration planning (groceries, freeze foods)
- Plan who can do laundry, garbage, animal care, light housekeeping, errands, etc. (3-4 weeks of help)

Transportation

- Ride home from hospital
- Ride to/from follow-up appointments
- Confirm with surgeon when safe to drive after surgery

Prepare Recovery Space

- Confirm a safe recovery space
- Prepare recovery space, clean clothes/sheets
- Move essentials and appliances to waist level

Medical/Physical Preparation

- Review prescriptions/supplements with surgeon
- Focus on overall wellness: (sleep, healthy nutrition, body movement/exercise) before surgery support optimal healing
- Complete required labs/tests and stabilize health conditions for safety during surgery and recovery

Stress Reduction and Mental Health

- Connect with friends for emotional support
- Connect/re-connect with a therapist
- To reduce stress and anxiety, list three self-care activities you can do before and after surgery

Supplies

- Obtain discharge instructions and supply list for surgeon before surgery
- Purchase all necessary supplies from surgeon list

Determining Your Share of Cost for Surgery

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Not all insurance policies are the same with Kaiser. To learn more about your share of cost, please contact Member Services at 1-800-464-4000 and have your member number ready.

Outpatient Procedures:

- Top surgery is usually an outpatient procedure meaning that you will be discharged on the same day of surgery.
- You will need to ask KP Member Services for your share of cost for a “transgender outpatient surgery” or service code “SURGTG”

Additional Kaiser Permanente Financial Department Contacts:

- Kaiser Medical Financial Assistance: 1-800-498-2748
- Kaiser Patient Financial Services: 1-866-399-7696
- Deductible Products and Services: 1-800-390-3507

Surgery Consultation FAQ

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Your surgery consultation is a chance for you to ask your surgeon questions that will help you make decisions about your surgery and prepare for your recovery. Remember, you have a right to be fully informed about any procedure you are considering.

Surgery

- What type of surgical technique do you use? Why?
- What choices will I need to make about how surgery is performed? Can I make specific requests?
- If I need a revision what are my options? What would that surgery and recovery process be like?
- How will surgery impact sensation? When after surgery can I expect maximum sensation to return?
- How long will I be under general anesthesia?
- Can I look at photos of your results?
- What are the most common complications from this procedure? What are the signs or symptoms?

Before Surgery

- How does my medical history impact this procedure? How far in advance should I quit smoking? Is there a minimum or maximum weight / BMI for surgery?
- Do you have any diet or lifestyle recommendations to promote healing before or after surgery?
- Will I need to stop any medications before surgery?

After Surgery

- What medications will I be prescribed? What dressing changes will I need to do after surgery? What do you recommend to reduce scarring?
- How soon after surgery can I walk a mile? Drive? Take public transit? Swim? Do strenuous exercise? Drink alcohol? Have sex?
- How long do people usually take off work or school after each stage?

Choosing Your Caregivers

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Choosing and preparing your caregivers is an important part of preparation for surgery. Recovery is both a physical and emotional journey that may—at times—be challenging. Creating a circle of supportive caregivers is vital. Members of this circle need to be people who you trust, can depend on, and create a safe and healthy emotional environment. The people you allow to help you through this process must understand this. Share this handout with your caregiving team so they can more fully understand your needs.

Think about the type of care you will need. Evaluate your own comfort and your caregiver's comfort in helping you with these tasks.

Questions to Ask Yourself

- How would you feel about your caregiver assisting you to the toilet, to bathe, or to dress?
- Is your caregiver comfortable assisting with drains and helping with personal care if needed?
- What will your caregiver do to support themselves if they are overwhelmed?

Think About Your Needs

- What makes me feel calm and relaxed?
- Who do I feel comfortable and safe to be around?
- Who provides me with the emotional support I need?
- Who makes me laugh?
- Who is most dependable?

Questions for Caregivers to think about:

- *What are my strengths as a caregiver?*
- *Do I understand what is being asked of me?*
- *What are my needs and limits?*
- *Have I communicated my limits and boundaries?*
- *What conversations do I still need to have with my loved one before their surgery?*
- *What will I need to do to take care of myself while I am providing care for someone else?*

When choosing your caregivers, you want to select people who are caring, dependable, and safe to be around.

Preparing Your Caregivers

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Once you have identified your caregivers, give them as much information about what to expect. Also, give them enough notice so they can plan for their own needs. Better prepare your primary caregivers for your recovery needs by including them in pre-operative consultations and appointments.

Communicate Your Needs

Your caregivers (relatives, chosen family, friends and neighbors) might not be sure how to best support you.

- Be proactive; make your care plan before surgery
- Identify which activities/roles you need help with
- Assign specific tasks to individual caregivers

Brainstorm all aspects of your life, including day-to-day responsibilities around the house and activities of self-care that you enjoy.

Examples of Caregiver Activities

- Meal preparation
- Social visits
- Light house work (dog walking, laundry, tidying up, etc.)
- Pharmacy runs
- Grocery shopping
- Transportation to post-op appointments
- Emotional support



Websites can help your circle of support coordinate their responsibilities:

www.caringbridge.org
www.lotsahelpinghands.com

Remember, this may be a stressful time for your caregivers. They will also need breaks and time to re-charge.

How Can I Help?

FAQ Sheet for Caregivers

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When our friends or family members face a health issue, we naturally want to support them. We just may not know exactly how to help. Below is a list of concrete ways that you can offer to support your loved one through their gender affirming surgery and recovery.

Start with the basics

Before surgery, help your loved one prepare for their return home. This may include helping them clean or declutter their space so they can return to a calm and safe living environment. You might want to help with grocery shopping or help preparing nutritious meals that can be frozen and heated later.

Take on household chores

For the first few weeks post-discharge, your loved one will need help with basic household chores. You might want to ask if you can assist with them. This might include grocery shopping, cooking, housekeeping, and pet care.

Assist with medical appointments

Until your loved one can resume normal daily activities, they may need helping driving to and from their medical appointments. Make yourself available for help with transportation.

Keep a running list for medical professionals

There is a significant amount of information that is provided to any patient upon discharge from surgery. It is difficult to remember all the questions patients want to ask their doctors. Help them by keeping a running list of questions or concerns that they want to discuss with their doctors, nurses, therapist or other medical or health professionals.

Watch for changes

You provide an important role in helping your loved one heal during their recovery. Keep an eye out for changes that others—including the patient—might miss. Although not expected, any complications from surgery and side effects from medication must be addressed promptly.

Provide emotional support

Many patients have been looking forward to this surgery for years. But that does not mean that their recovery from surgery will be free from feelings of frustration, fear, or doubt. Ongoing support and encouragement will be very helpful during this process.

Take care of yourself

Being a caregiver can be an emotionally and physically draining task. Clear and direct communication will be helpful. Take time for yourself during this process, too. Make sure that you have scheduled breaks, free from these temporary responsibilities.

FAQ Sheet - FMLA

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What is FMLA?

FMLA refers to the Family Medical Leave Act, a federal law that guarantees certain employees up to 12 workweeks of **unpaid leave** each year with no threat of job loss.

You **do not need** to disclose the procedure or surgery details for FMLA. You only need to say you are having a **medically necessary procedure**.

Your employer **may require** you to take sick time, personal time, or vacation time during your leave.

You might decide to use time you have accrued so you continue to get paid during your leave.

If you are planning multiple surgeries within a year and are concerned about exceeding 12 weeks of leave, ask your employer to confirm the start and end date of your FMLA year.



Am I eligible for FMLA?

- You have worked for your employer for at least 12 months
- You have worked for your employer for at least 1250 hours in the last 12 months
- Your employer has 50 or more employees within 75 miles of your job
- You are automatically eligible for FMLA if you are a state, local, or federal employee.

How do I apply?

- At least 30 days before your leave, contact your human resources department and/or supervisor and tell them you will be taking FMLA leave.
- Obtain documentation of your medical leave from your surgeon in your medical record.
- Contact the KP Release of Medical Information department to complete the FMLA forms required by your employer.

FAQ Sheet

State Disability Insurance (SDI)

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About SDI

California State Disability Insurance (SDI) provides temporary income replacement to eligible workers who need time off of work.

SDI benefits may be available to you following your surgery.

What is SDI?

SDI is a temporary income replacement program

- SDI is a temporary income replacement state benefit that is payable for a maximum of 52 weeks
- Your weekly benefit amount is approximately 55% of your income (some exceptions apply)

Am I eligible to receive SDI?

To receive SDI benefits, you must:

- Have paid at least \$300 in wages towards SDI contributions.
- File your claim within 49 days of your surgery.
- Serve a seven-day, non-payable waiting period.

Upon approval, you will receive a **debit card** and an account where your benefits will be deposited.

Your employer may require that you use all your accrued sick or vacation time before SDI benefits take effect.

How do I apply for SDI?

- Ask your surgeon to complete a “Work Activity Status Form” in your medical record before surgery indicating the dates of your leave from work.
- Complete your SDI application online or by mail *after* surgery. You will be given a registration number when you complete your application.
- Contact the KP Release of Medical Information Department and provide them with your registration number. This department will complete the provider portion of your SDI application.

To learn more visit

<http://www.edd.ca.gov/disability> or call 1-800-480-3287

The Importance of Self-Care

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About Self-Care



Making sure that we take time for ourselves is one of the most important aspects of living a full and emotionally healthy life. Often these activities of self-care are the first things that drop off our daily “to-do” list when life gets stressful. Practicing self-care can be very helpful as you heal and recover after surgery.

What is self-care?

Self-care is any activity that you consciously do to tend to your mental, emotional, and physical needs. They are fun, enjoyable, or relaxing activities that replenish you. You may already do these activities without labeling them as “self-care.”

What are some barriers to self-care?

You might not engage in activities of self-care for a variety of reasons. For instance, you may have received messages that self-care is selfish when in fact it is important to our health and wellbeing. You may be worried that you cannot afford certain types of self-care or do not have the time for them.

Tips: Self-care can take many forms and it’s ok to start small. Many self-care activities are free. Brainstorming a list of activities you enjoy is a helpful way to get started.

Some Self-Care Activities

- Listen to your favorite songs
- Watch your favorite movie
- Engage your senses with relaxing scents; aromatherapy
- Read a library book
- Meditate
- Prioritize sleep
- Eat healthy, nutritious foods
- Cook something new
- Laugh with friends
- Write an uplifting letter to a friend
- Go for a walk
- Spend time in nature
- Start a craft project
- De-clutter your closet or home
- Have a picnic with a friend
- Add your own ideas to this list!

Try to complete **at least one** activity of self-care each day. Make sure it is intentional, replenishing, and enjoyable!

Top Surgery Resources and Tips

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Non-KP Top Surgery Web Information:

- <http://www.topsurgery.net/>
- <http://www.genderconfirmation.com/which-surgery-is-for-me/>
- <https://neutrois.me/2012/10/09/top-surgery-tips-and-advice/>
- <http://www.transbucket.com/>
- Facebook Group: “Top surgery support (removal/reduction)”

Non-binary Transition Resources:

- <https://genderqueer.me/non-binary-transition/>
- <https://thebodyisnotanapology.com/magazine/transitioning-while-non-binary/>

Top Surgery Autobiography:

- [Top Surgery: Unbound by Drake Cameron Sterling](#)

Kaiser Permanente Northern California Gender Affirming Care Web Pages:

Kaiser Permanente, Regional Transgender Website:

<https://mydoctor.kaiserpermanente.org/ncal/mdo/presentation/healthpromotionpage/index.jsp?promotion=transgendercare> (See: **Masculinizing Chest Surgery (Top Surgery)**)

Kaiser Permanente, Multi-Specialty Transitions Clinic Oakland Website:

<https://thrive.kaiserpermanente.org/care-near-you/northern-california/eastbay/departments/transgender-care/gender-affirming-surgery/> (See: **Top Surgery**)

Top Surgery Resources and Tips

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Physical Preparation:

- Being in your best physical shape before surgery will support your recovery and healing
- Stabilize any chronic health conditions
- Eat nutrient rich foods (consult with nutritionist, surgeon, or doctor for nutrition tips)
- Body movement and exercise before surgery increases blood circulation & core strength
 - You may want to discuss chest exercises with your surgeon in preparation for surgery
- If you use substances consider reducing or stopping use 2-3 months before surgery to reduce stress on your body and ensure that you have adequate circulation for healing and recovery
- Avoid all forms of tobacco; nicotine slows wound healing and can result in more visible scarring

Emotional Preparation:

- Clarify surgery goals, hopes, fears, expectations
- It may help to share these with a friend or therapist and write out thoughts in a journal
- Practice stress reduction exercises (i.e., mindfulness, deep breathing, aromatherapy, spirituality)
- Research surgery and surgeons, familiarize yourself with expected outcomes
- Make a list of coping strategies and low-key things you can do for 3-4 weeks of recovery at home

Practical Preparation Tips:

- Move essentials down from high or low shelves to waist level (“t-rex arm” range of motion)
- Grocery shop and stock up on essentials
- Do laundry (clean sheets, towels); arrange recovery space so it’s clean and easy to walk around
- Reduce stress that is in your control (catch up with bills, homework)
- Set up care team; concrete requests for help (house chores, company, rides, emotional support)
- Schedule visits with: <http://lotsahelpinghands.com/> or <https://www.caringbridge.org/>

Useful Supplies:

Pillows - propping, car rides, under knees to sleep	Easy slip on shoes or flip flops
Button-up/zip-up clothes, elastic pants/sweats	Baby wipes for cleaning until okay to shower
Neck Pillow	Bendy straws
Dry Shampoo	Smoothies / Vitamin C / Lots of liquids

A few post-op considerations:

- You may be ready to take a walk around the block and get out of the house around day 3-4
- 2-4 weeks off work/school typically recommended, depending on type of job/school demands
- Can take 6-12 months for all swelling to go down, nerves to regrow, and final result achieved
- May consider avoiding strenuous exercise for 3-6 months to avoid scar stretching

Additional Resources

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Resources for Name & Gender Marker Updates

- Monthly ID Clinic at Kaiser MST in Oakland for paperwork assistance. Call 510-752-7149 for details!
- Transgender Law Center: <https://transgenderlawcenter.org/resources/id/id-please>
- Trans Equality: <http://www.transequality.org/documents/>

Guided Imagery Talks and Surgery Preparation Videos

Kaiser Permanente Guided Imagery Podcasts

<https://healthy.kaiserpermanente.org/health/mycare/consumer/health-wellness/live-healthy>

<https://healthy.kaiserpermanente.org/health-wellness/mental-health/tools-resources/digital>

Kaiser Permanente General Surgery Preparation Instructional Videos

<https://thrive.kaiserpermanente.org/care-near-you/northern-california/eastbay/departments/perioperative-medicine/prepare-for-your-procedure-with-emmi/>

Emotional Support Resources

Kaiser Permanente Psychiatry

Your local KP Psychiatry department can provide information about individual and group therapy and psychiatry services. You do not need a referral from your doctor in order to get services. Walk in assistance is also available during business hours.

Kaiser Permanente Behavioral Health Care Member Helpline

Kaiser Permanente has an after-hours, weekends, and holiday phone number allowing you to reach out and talk to a licensed mental health professional.

If you find that you are experiencing an emotional crisis, call **1-866-453-3932**

Outside Resources

Trans Lifeline: 1-877-565-8860

The Trevor Project: 1-866-4-U-TREVOR (866-488-7386) (Online chat also available)

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK (8255)

Crisis Text Line 24/7: Text Home to 741741

Resources for Family and Friends:

- **PFLAG** “Our Trans Loved Ones” Online Resources
- **Gender Spectrum** -> Resources -> Parenting and Family