

Introduction

Stoma Reversal Surgery: Advice for Recovery

How Were You Offered the Reversal?

After my first surgery, I was keen to pursue a reversal. I was informed that it would be necessary to wait sixteen weeks before the procedure could take place. This information was shared during the post-surgery conversations, as my initial operation had been performed as an emergency but was reversible.

Feelings Before Surgery

I felt incredibly anxious, partly due to complications from my two previous surgeries. I kept these worries to myself so as not to alarm my family. Despite my nerves, I was determined to go ahead, having spent months weighing the decision. I had no major issues with my stoma, which made me hesitate, but I suspected my feelings might be different if I had experienced problems.

Preparation for Surgery

For the most part, no special preparations were needed, other than the usual hospital pre-assessment. This included meetings with the anaesthetist and consuming preloaded drinks a few days before the operation.

The Day of Surgery and Hospital Stay

The day itself went smoothly. I arrived at the hospital at 09:00 and checked into the theatre lounge. Once there, I began to relax, completed all paperwork, and had my observations taken. I waited until around 11:00 before being taken to theatre for the reversal. I woke up at approximately 18:00, feeling relatively well aside from some tiredness. My hospital stay lasted around a week.

Feelings After the Procedure

Following the surgery, I looked forward to starting a new chapter. I was uncertain about how the recovery would progress, but I resolved to set personal goals and let nature take its course. My wound was different from previous experiences; there was no open wound to manage, which was a relief. I only required pain medication for a couple of days, and the tubes and drips were removed within that period. Overall, my initial recovery was better than I had expected.

Returning Home: Diet and Exercise Considerations

Once home, I focused on self-care, particularly around my bottom, as it had not been used in several years and was prone to soreness. I prepared a cleaning kit with dry wipes, Trios Elisse barrier wipes, and a pot of Sudocrem. Establishing a thorough cleaning routine after using the toilet proved beneficial: wiping with a damp wipe, followed by a dry and barrier wipe, and applying Sudocrem when necessary.

Diet-wise, I adopted a 'little and often' approach, starting with a soft diet and gradually introducing more variety in the following days. I ensured I drank plenty of fluids and avoided fizzy drinks, which was not difficult as I do not usually enjoy them.

Regarding exercise, I had a hernia repair during the same operation, so I avoided heavy lifting. My recovery period lasted about six weeks, after which I returned to work. I steadily built up my activity level by walking frequently, which helped my recovery. It's important to remember that most of the surgery takes place internally; just because there's no visible wound doesn't mean one should become complacent.

Caring for Your Wound

I was fortunate not to have an open wound, as my surgical opening was sealed. The only wounds were two small holes from the vacuum pump pipes, which healed within twenty-four hours. It was unusual to have just a scar immediately following surgery.

Advice for Others Considering Stoma Reversal Surgery

Do not focus too much on other people's stories. Instead, gather information and facts relevant to your own situation. Each journey is unique, and your body's response will be specific to you. Proceed slowly, listen to your body, and stop if you feel you need to. Careful planning will benefit you during recovery and beyond.

Looking Forward

I am excited about regaining my drive and enthusiasm for helping others, walking, and returning to the gym and swimming. Once the weather improves, I look forward to cycling again. I have also started a photography venture, which I hope to combine with walking, spending time in nature, and appreciating life without taking it too seriously.