



Enhanced Recovery After Surgery (ERAS)

Faster recovery, fewer complications and a better patient experience while lowering costs

Our challenge	Results to date	
<p>Nearly 300,000 surgeries performed each year in Alberta</p> <hr/> <p>More than 55 sites¹ across Alberta provide surgical care</p>	<p><i>Improving quality of care, patient experience & health outcomes through clinical best practices</i></p> <hr/> <p>↓ On average, ERAS care reduced patients' length of stay in hospital by ↓ ↓ 1 to 2 days ↓ with no increase in readmissions²</p>	<p>In just 2 years, the net health system savings^{3,4} of ERAS implementation for colorectal surgeries alone is: \$2.3 million</p> <hr/> <p>Estimated return on investment: \$2.1 to \$3.8 for every \$1 invested</p>

What was the issue?

Patients undergoing surgery want to know they're receiving the best care, and want to recover and return to their regular activities as quickly as possible. All Albertans benefit when surgical care is safe, efficient and sustainable.

Each year, nearly 300,000 surgeries are performed across Alberta. With more than 55 surgical sites, there can be wide variations in surgical practices and outcomes. Recognizing the opportunity to standardize practices and improve surgical care, and the potential benefits this would bring to patients and care providers, several SCNs took action to bring Enhanced Recovery after Surgery (ERAS) care to Alberta.

Patient-centered care, at every step

ERAS enables patients and families to be actively involved in their own care. "The program is based on great research and what works best for recovery. Most important, it involves the patient and family in understanding and taking part in their care to promote recovery," says Dr. Gregg Nelson, co-chair of the ERAS steering committee

- **Before surgery:** Patients are given information about what to expect and encouraged to eat well and be active.
- **During surgery:** Patients are kept warm and given medications to prevent complications.
- **After surgery:** Patients are encouraged to eat, drink and get up. The care team helps patients manage post-surgery pain and nausea with minimal medication and by removing tubes and drains. Patients are also equipped with information and supports to continue their recovery after going home.

"My recovery after the latest surgery was amazing," says Jeanne Place about her 2017 operation. "I ate the night before and then had supper after surgery. I felt really good; I was physically and mentally better."

"Night and day" – that's how Mary Anne Prosofsky describes the difference in her recovery time after having a second colorectal surgery with ERAS care. "I was surprised at how quickly I felt better after the second surgery. I had more energy and was up moving sooner...I didn't experience any nausea after the second surgery and I was in hospital three days less."

What we did to address it

ERAS care is based on international guidelines that provide a consistent way of managing patient care before, during and after surgery. Drawing on best practices and evidence from around the world, implementation of ERAS has been shown to help patients stay strong physically and mentally, recover faster, spend less time in hospital, experience fewer complications, and have lower healthcare costs.

In 2013, four SCNs partnered with clinical care teams, operational leaders and patients to plan how to adapt and implement ERAS guidelines at local hospitals. Initially, the team piloted ERAS guidelines at six sites for patients undergoing colorectal surgeries.

Results from the first six sites were positive and showed that patients receiving ERAS care were able to go home sooner, with fewer complications and no increase in readmission rates.⁵ Three years later, the team expanded the program to nine surgical sites and other elective surgeries (gynecological, pancreas, cystectomy, liver, breast reconstruction and major head/neck).

How this work is making a difference

Surgical care in Alberta is getting better and patients are going home sooner as a result of this innovative patient-centered approach. ERAS involves patients in preparing for their surgery and during their recovery. It helps patients stay strong, improves outcomes, reduces complications and creates a better patient experience.

Since ERAS care implementation began in Alberta in 2013, there have been significant clinical improvements and a positive return on investment for Alberta's healthcare system. Following surgery, colorectal patients at ERAS sites experience fewer surgical, lung, and heart problems. And in the first two years alone, data from the six ERAS pilot sites shows the program has contributed a net savings of \$2.3 million (\$1,768 per patient), a gain four times greater than the implementation investment.^{5,6}

Similar outcomes exist for patients undergoing other types of surgeries, with ERAS patients experiencing shorter hospital stays (by 2 to 4 days), fewer complications, and cost savings of \$956 per patient.⁷

What's next?

Over the next three years, the goal is to roll out ERAS care across most surgeries and hospitals in Alberta. With the spread of ERAS care, we expect to improve outcomes for surgical patients and Alberta's health system and enable the almost 300,000 Albertans having surgery each year experience a better surgical recovery.

To learn more, visit www.ahs.ca/ERAS