

Being nutritionally “fit for surgery” enhances infection protection

- Patients who are well-nourished before surgery benefit from earlier hospital discharge and fewer postoperative complications, in particular infections.
- Surgical complications, such as infections, can double patients' hospital stay^[1], and earlier discharge from hospitals results in lower healthcare costs.
- Clinical trials show that patients fed 5 days before surgery with Impact® experience a reduction in incidence of postoperative complications and in hospital stay.

Nyon, April 29, 2005 – An international expert panel of surgeons concluded in a recent article published in *The Surgeon, Journal of the Royal Colleges of Surgeons of Edinburgh and Ireland*, that patients undergoing elective surgery benefit from earlier hospital discharge and fewer infectious complications if they are nutritionally “fit for surgery”^[2].

Expert panel member and clinical triallist Professor Marco Braga, Chairman of the Digestive Surgery Unit, San Raffaele, Milan, Italy, says “As postoperative infections often result in prolonged hospital stay, ensuring patients are well nourished before surgery will contribute to reducing hospital costs.”

The article confirms that undergoing surgery is associated with a period of relative immunosuppression that leaves patients at high risk of postoperative complications, especially infections^[2,3]. Clinical trials, in over 300 patients, show that even those who are well nourished and fed 5 days before major elective surgery with the immune-enhancing formula Impact® have significantly fewer postoperative complications compared with patients who received standard feeds^[4]. The trials with Impact® show

- a 50% reduction in infection complications^[4],
- a nearly 3-day reduction in hospital stay, and
- a 2.6 day reduction in time spent on a ventilator^[5].

Another trial conducted in 150 malnourished patients also shows further reduced postoperative complications if Impact® is continued for 5-7 days after surgery^[6].

The expert review article recommends that the routine perioperative work-up of all patients undergoing major abdominal elective surgery should therefore include nutritional assessment in order to identify those at risk for postoperative complications on the basis of:

- Low body mass index (<18.5 kg/m²)
- Low serum albumin concentration (<35g/l in the absence of renal or hepatic disease)
- Recent (1-2 months) weight loss exceeding 5% of usual body weight.

The concept of patients being ‘Fit for Surgery’ has been endorsed by the Royal College of Surgeons of England, which has run one day educational conference, entitled “*Fit for Surgery! A Fast track Perioperative Care*” on 28 April 2005. The conference was attended by more than 60 leading surgeons and hospital administrators.

References

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Notes:

- Further details about “Fit for Surgery! A Fast track Perioperative Care” are available from Louise Beatty Communications, telephone 0044 (0)20 8893 3919 or e-mail at l.beatty@btinternet.com.

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