

TO YOUR HEALTH

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WAITING TO RECOVER

by Barbara Chenoweth, NP

It doesn't matter if one is recovering from a common cold or major surgery, it is typical to wish that the recovery would speed up and one would be back to a normal state of health as quickly as possible. Rarely do we recognize what is involved in the body's healing and restorative process. Most of us under-estimate the length of time it takes to recuperate and when we do not achieve our internal time-line, depression can creep in.

Years ago, people with tuberculosis went away for a "rest cure" of fresh air, healthy food and rest. It was not unusual for people to take weeks or months to recuperate from an illness. Was it easier to cope with the slower passage of time in those days? Were expectations of recovery different?

Certainly today with modern medicine's minimally invasive surgery, day surgery and brief hospitalizations, the expectation of recovery time has changed. If one can have major surgery and return home in a day or two, the recovery time too must be shorter. Surgeons are quick to say that a person can do "whatever he feels like," with few restrictions, reinforcing the view that recovery time will be faster.

And in some cases, recovery time *is* quicker. Yet, our bodies cannot be rushed. Surgery is still surgery even if the hospital discharge is sooner. Pneumonia is still pneumonia, and it can take six to eight weeks to regain one's energy and stamina. Broken bones still need six to eight weeks to heal. People with underlying, chronic health conditions also need additional time to heal. As people grow older, recuperation takes more time.

The ability to "bounce back" simply is slower, not impossible but slower.

Recuperation is an "uneven" process with one good day, another slower day. Only when one looks back over the past week or weeks can improvements be seen. Because of the slow day-to-day progress, there is an inclination to become discouraged, even depressed. It is not unusual to have "down" days after surgery or a serious illness. If a person is also coping with a painful recovery, depression is more likely.

Fortunately, important steps can be taken to help "bounce back" after an illness or surgery. The first step is to recognize that recuperation is not a fast process. Expect that recovery will take time. Taking small steps, one at a time, is the best way to proceed:

- Go slow
- Initially, try to conserve energy by only doing one activity per day
- Get plenty of rest: sitting quietly or taking a nap
- If an activity causes fatigue or more discomfort the next day, slow down
- Begin physical activity slowly, for example, gradually increase walking time
- Remember that the body needs its energy to heal, so avoid expending too much energy
- Get plenty of sleep: sleep allows the body and mind to regenerate
- Keep moving: change position frequently, walk around your room or your apartment.
- Be prepared to feel fatigued; it's natural when you are healing
- Eat a healthy diet: small portions may help overcome a poor appetite

Waiting to Recover (cont.)

- Slowly resume a normal diet; it's a good time to make healthy diet changes
- Sometimes dietary supplements can help one gain weight, if it is needed
- Take medicines consistently
- Begin activities that you enjoy
- Have short, frequent visits with friends and family
- Do not become isolated
- Nourish your spirit in ways that are comforting to you

Perhaps the best advice is to change one's expectation of recovery time. Recovery cannot be rushed, but it will happen in its own way and in its own time. Our bodies are amazingly resilient and are always seeking to restore our balance towards health.

The Bedford Police will be picking up unused over-the-counter and prescription medications at the Clinic on Friday February 10, 2012.

Please bring your unused medications for disposal between 8:30 am and 12:30 pm. Medications cannot be accepted by the Clinic on any other days or times.

- NOTICE -

If you have a Clinic appointment in February, please bring your insurance cards, whether they are old or new, so that we may take a copy for our records. Thank you in advance!

COMING ATTRACTION

On Wednesday, February 15, Deb McNiven, Manager of Fitness, will give a talk on "The Five Components of Fitness." Presentation begins in Auditorium Center at 10:30 a.m.

RESIDENT SATISFACTION WITH OUT-PATIENT CLINIC SERVICES SURVEY RESULTS

In September, a Resident Satisfaction Survey was sent to 165 independent Residents asking them to evaluate the Clinic services. One hundred fifteen (70%) surveys were returned, an excellent response! Six questions asked people to rate the Clinic: Excellent, Very Good, Fair, or Unsatisfactory. The questions included:

1. Were you satisfied with the quality of services you received? 88% said Excellent and 12% Very good.
2. Were appointments scheduled in a timely manner? 73% Excellent and 27% Very Good.
3. Were your needs met by a responsive, friendly and courteous staff? 92% Excellent and 8% Very Good.
4. Was the Clinic environment clean and inviting? 91% Excellent and 9% Very Good.
5. Were you satisfied with the amount of time you received for your appointment? 84% Excellent and 16% Very Good.
6. After you were discharged home from the hospital, Llewysac or the Health Center, was the Clinic responsive to your needs? (52 Residents responded that the question was not applicable.) Excellent 71%, Very Good 23%, 6% Fair.

When asked what was liked most about the Clinic, 63 people said the staff, 29 said the quality of care, 19 the availability, 18 the location, and 14 the atmosphere.

What was liked least was the lack of Clinic weekend hours (25 people) and what could be improved was offering weekend hours (18 people). *We are happy to announce that in the future the Clinic will have weekend hours and will be hiring weekend Nurse Practitioners! Stay tuned!*