

Building Strength To Recover Strong

Your body is preparing for
something big. And Wonderful!

Surgery asks a lot of your body.

While much of your preparation may focus on medications, nutrition, labs, appointments, and planning for recovery, there is another important piece of preparation:

Your physical reserve.

What is your physical reserve?

Think of physical reserve as what your body has “in the tank” when surgery temporarily makes everyday activities a bit more challenging

Building strength and stamina before surgery can help prepare you for the physical demands of recovery. Exercise-based prehabilitation has been associated with improvements in physical and functional capacity before major surgery.

The goal of prehab isn't to become an athlete before surgery or bulk up...and for what it's worth, this guide won't get you there!.

The goal is to arrive on your surgery day stronger and better prepared for recovery than you are today.



Your Amelia Prehab exercise program focuses on three things:



Building and Maintaining Lean Muscle

While overall muscle is important, we'll especially focus on the legs, hips, and trunk. These areas give your body more physical reserve heading into surgery.



Improving Functional Movement

Recovery involves everyday movements that you may normally take for granted:

- Standing from a chair
- Getting on and off the toilet
- Getting in and out of bed
- Walking around your home
- Climbing stairs
- Maintaining balance
- Getting in and out of a vehicle
- Getting dressed and undressed
- Getting in and out of garments
- Moving without relying heavily on your arms to push or pull

We train these movements before surgery, so your body is more prepared for them afterward.



Increase Stamina

During the early recovery period, even a short walk may feel harder than usual. Improving your cardiovascular fitness before surgery helps build your capacity for sustained activity.

Five Simple Movements, One Stronger Recovery

You don't need complicated exercises or a home gym to build a stronger body. Our program focuses on five fundamental movement patterns:



SQUAT: Stronger legs and hips can make everyday movements such as getting up from a chair or toilet easier to manage during recovery.



HINGE: A hip hinge teaches your hips and posterior chain, the muscles along the backside of your body, to produce force while your trunk remains stable. Strong glutes and hips support walking, standing, balance, and controlled movement.



STEP: Walking, stairs, curbs, and getting into your home all require you to repeatedly support your body on one leg. Stronger legs and better balance can support safer, more confident mobility.



CARRY: Carrying weight while walking trains your legs, trunk, grip, balance, and cardiovascular system simultaneously. Recovery requires whole-body stamina—not just isolated muscle strength.



BRACE: Your core does much more than perform crunches. Its primary job is to stabilize your trunk while the rest of your body moves. Trunk control contributes to balance, walking, transfers, posture, and controlled movement.

POP QUIZ!

Is it bad to train a certain muscle group, like pecs before UTM (under the muscle) implants or core before a tummy tuck?

Answer: No, in fact, training those muscle groups, along with the others mentioned above, will actually offer a ton of benefits for your recovery and results. More defined, stronger muscles don't make the surgeon's job harder; they only make your recovery easier.

Before You Begin

This program is intended for patients who have been cleared to participate in exercise before surgery. Stop exercising and contact your primary care provider if you experience concerning symptoms such as chest pain, fainting, unusual shortness of breath, new severe pain, or another symptom that feels medically concerning.

If you have significant orthopedic limitations, balance problems, cardiovascular or pulmonary disease, exercise restrictions, or another condition that affects your ability to exercise safely, talk with your healthcare team before beginning.

Remember, prehab should challenge you, but it should not feel impossible or overwhelmingly difficult. This is preparation, not punishment! You should finish most sessions feeling like you worked, but not like you completely exhausted yourself.



A good workout playlist makes any exercise routine feel more enjoyable (and can keep your surgical goals top of mind!) Try the **Amelia Recovery Playlist** on Spotify to get your blood flowing.

What Equipment Do I Need?

Very little. Most of this program can be completed at home.

Helpful equipment may include:

- A sturdy chair
- Supportive athletic shoes
- A resistance band
- Light dumbbells
- A weighted vest
- A backpack that can be safely loaded
- A sturdy step or staircase

Have access to a gym? Great—but you don't need one. Throughout the guide, you'll see both **HOME** and **GYM** options.

Find Your Best Fit

Choose the track that sounds the most like you right now. There's no wrong or right choice. The best track is the one that meets you where you are so you can safely build the strength, confidence, and resilience needed to support your strongest recovery.

Exploring Movement

I'm beginning, returning to exercise, or finding a routine that works for me.

This track may be a good fit if:

- You're ready to make movement a more consistent part of your routine.
- You're returning to exercise after some time away.
- You'd like to build comfort and confidence with bodyweight movements.
- You're interested in gradually introducing weights.
- You're building your endurance and prefer a steady pace.
- You want time to learn and feel confident with each movement.

Your Goal

Build a strong foundation, grow your confidence, and celebrate progress with every step.

Moving Consistently

Exercise is already a regular part of my routine.

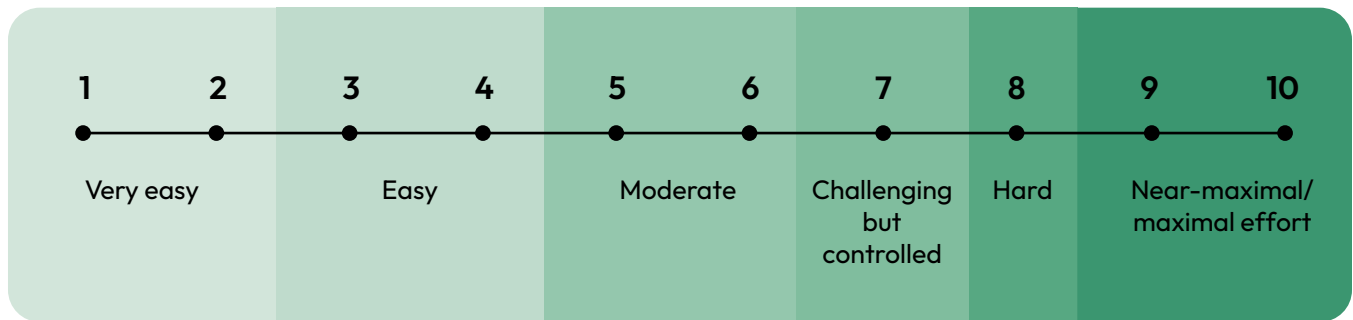
This track may be a good fit if:

- You exercise several times a week.
- Resistance training or structured workouts are a regular part of your routine.
- You feel confident performing movements such as squats, hinges, step-ups, and weighted exercises.
- You're comfortable with bodyweight movements and ready for additional resistance.
- You can comfortably walk for 30 minutes or longer.
- You're ready to build on the strength and endurance you already have.

Your Goal

Increase your strength and physical reserve while preparing muscle groups that will support you most throughout the recovery.

Understanding Effort



You do not need to exercise at maximum intensity to make progress. Throughout prehab, think about your effort on a 1–10 scale.

Most prehab exercises should feel approximately 6–8/10 by the end of a set. You should feel challenged while still maintaining good technique.

The Exploring Movement Plan

This plan is all about building strength, stamina, and confidence. You don't have to move perfectly or do everything at once. Each workout is an opportunity to learn what your body can do and prepare it for your recovery. Follow the weekly goals, celebrate every bit of progress, and get ready to feel stronger from the inside out!

Your Weekly Goal

Complete:

- ✓ Workout A — 2x/week
- ✓ Workout B — 1x/week when tolerated
- ✓ Walking — 3–5 days/week

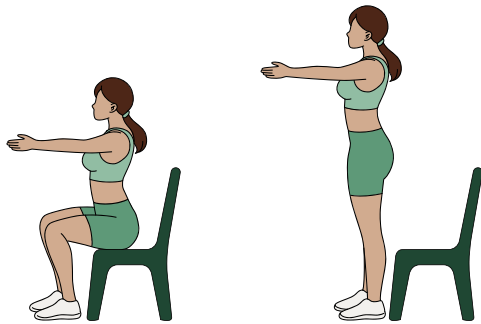
Leave at least one recovery day between harder strength sessions when possible.

Build Your Foundation

1

Chair Sit-to-Stand

2–3 sets × 8–12 repetitions



Sit toward the front of a sturdy chair with your feet planted firmly.

Lean slightly forward and drive through your feet to stand.

Sit back down slowly and with control.

Rest 60–90 seconds between sets.

Make it easier: Use a slightly taller chair or light hand assistance.

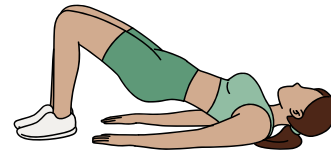
Make it harder: Remove hand assistance → air squat → hold a light weight → wear a light weighted vest.

Why this matters after surgery: Standing from chairs, beds, and toilets can become surprisingly difficult when you're sore and moving cautiously. Strong legs and core allow you to rely more on your lower body during these everyday movements.

2

Glute Bridge

2–3 sets × 10–15 repetitions



Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet planted.

Brace your abdomen gently and imagine pulling your belly button toward your spine.

Squeeze your glutes and lift your hips, breathing out at your raise your hips up.

Lower slowly.

Rest 45–60 seconds between sets.

Gym alternative: Hip thrust machine or barbell hip thrust.

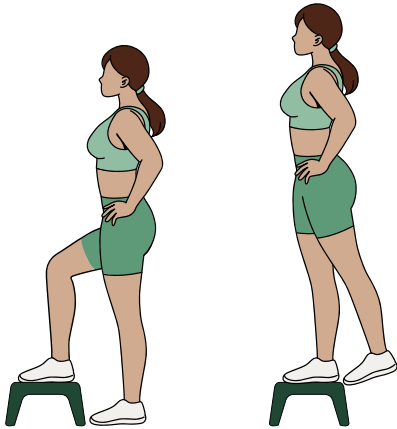
Why this matters after surgery: Your glutes are major contributors to standing, walking, climbing stairs, and maintaining upright posture.

Beginner Workout A

3

Supported Step-Up

2 sets × 6–10 repetitions per leg



Use a low, stable step.

Place one foot completely on the step and drive through that leg to rise.

Lower yourself under control.

Use a railing or stable support if needed.

Rest 60–90 seconds between sets.

Why this matters after surgery: Steps, stairs, and curbs require single-leg strength and balance. Training them beforehand helps build confidence and control.

4

Farmer Carry

3 rounds × 30–60 seconds



Hold light weights at your sides and walk with controlled posture.

At home: Use dumbbells, water jugs, or safely loaded household objects.

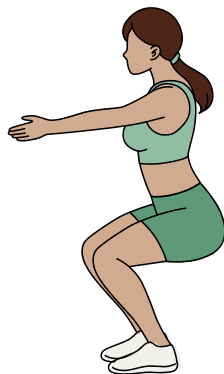
Gym: Dumbbells or kettlebells.

Why this matters after surgery: Carries train grip, legs, posture, trunk stability, balance, and stamina at the same time.

Strength + Stamina

1 Air Squat or Chair Squat

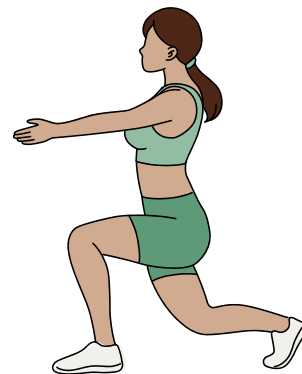
4 sets × 10–15 reps



Rest 60–90 seconds between sets.

2 Supported Reverse Lunge

2 sets × 6–8 per leg



Hold a countertop, railing, or sturdy support.

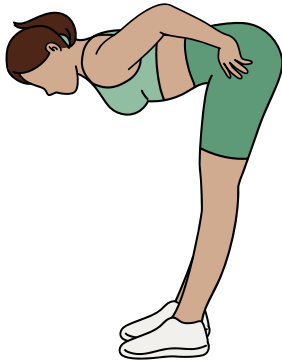
Step backward and gently lower your body, keeping the majority of your weight on your front leg. Distribute your weight through your toes and heel. Push through your front foot to return upright.

Alternative: Supported split squat.

3

Hip Hinge/Good Morning

2–3 sets × 10–12 reps



With your hands on your hips or on your head, lean forward, bending at the hip like you are taking a bow. Push your hips backwards with slightly bent legs to get your chest parallel to the floor. Keep your spine long and neutral and squeeze your glutes to return to an upright position.

Once comfortable, move to one of the home or gym movements below.

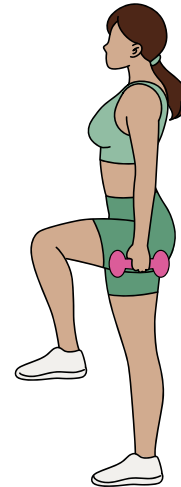
HOME: Loaded backpack Romanian deadlift

GYM: Dumbbell or kettlebell Romanian deadlift

4

Marching Carry

3 × 30–45 seconds



Hold one light weight at your side and slowly march; use your abs to stabilize your core and pull your knees toward your core with each step. Switch the weight to the other hand and repeat.

Beginner Walking Plan

Walking is part of your training, not an afterthought. Although not commonly recognized, walking is a wonderful cardiovascular activity that is approachable for all fitness levels. By improving your cardiovascular health, you are setting yourself up for a stronger recovery with greater stamina.

Weeks 1–2

🕒 10–20 minutes

📅 3–5 days/week

Comfortable-to-moderate pace.

Weeks 3–4

🕒 20–30 minutes

📅 4–5 days/week

Begin incorporating short periods of brisk walking.

For example: 2 minutes comfortable, 1 minute brisk, repeat.

Weeks 5–6

Work toward:

🕒 30+ minutes of continuous walking

📅 4–5 days/week

Include brisk intervals when tolerated.

Your goal isn't exhaustion.

Your goal is increasing the amount of work your body can comfortably perform.

The Moving Consistently Plan

You've already built a consistent movement routine. Now it's time to channel that momentum toward recovery. This plan will help you strengthen the muscles, movement patterns, and endurance that can support you before and after your surgery. Challenge yourself with intention, and get ready to turn the strength you already have into an even stronger foundation for recovery.

Your Weekly Goal

Your program uses three workouts:

- ✓ **Workout A** — Lower Body Strength
- ✓ **Workout B** — Functional Strength + Core
- ✓ **Workout C** — Conditioning

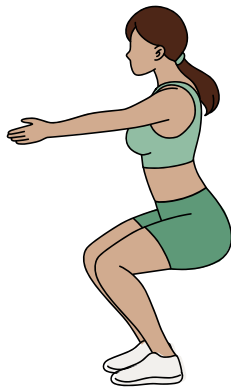
Aim for **3–4 structured exercise sessions per week** plus regular walking or aerobic activity.

Lower Body Strength

1

Squat

3–4 sets × 6–12 repetitions



Rest 90–120 seconds between sets.

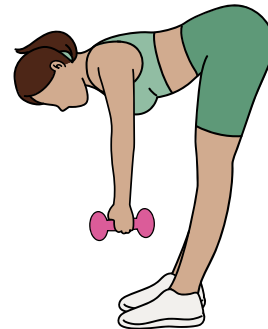
Home: Air squat → weighted vest squat → goblet squat

Gym: Goblet squat, dumbbell squat, or another familiar squat variation.

2

Romanian Deadlift

3 sets × 8–12



Rest 90 seconds between sets.

Home: Dumbbells, loaded backpack, or resistance band.

Gym: Dumbbells, kettlebell, or barbell if already experienced with the movement.

Moderate Workout A

3

Reverse Lunge or Split Squat

3 sets × 8–10 per leg



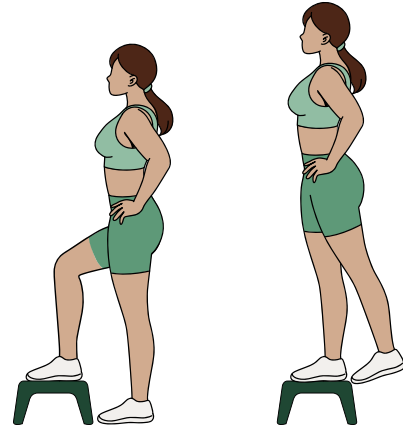
Rest 60–90 seconds between sets.

Add resistance when body weight becomes easy.

4

Step-Up

3 sets × 8–12 per leg



Progress using:

Higher step → additional repetitions
→ dumbbells → weighted vest.

WHY LOWER-BODY STRENGTH MATTERS

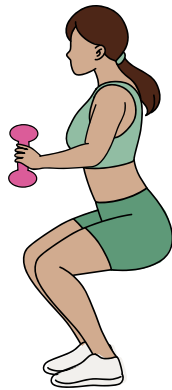
Your legs are responsible for repeatedly moving your body against gravity. Building reserves before surgery can make everyday postoperative mobility less physically demanding relative to your maximum capacity.

Functional Strength + Core

1

Goblet Squat or Weighted-Vest Squat

3 × 10–15



Rest 90–120 seconds between sets.

2

Single-Arm Farmer/ Suitcase Carry

3 × 45–60 seconds per side



The uneven load requires your trunk to resist leaning.

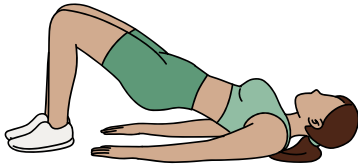
Walk slowly and maintain upright posture.

Moderate Workout B

3

Hip Thrust or Glute Bridge

3 × 10–15

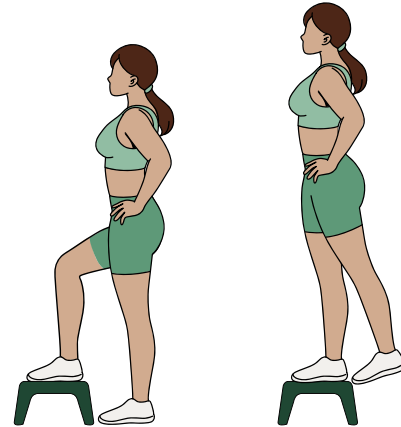


Add resistance as needed.

4

Step-Up Finisher

3–5 sets × 30 seconds



Complete:

30 seconds step-ups.

Rest 30–60 seconds.

Repeat 3–5 rounds.

WHY THIS MATTERS AFTER SURGERY

Recovery doesn't happen one repetition at a time with two minutes of rest between activities.

Your body needs enough strength **and** stamina to perform repeated daily movements. Combining functional strength and controlled conditioning helps prepare for that demand.

Conditioning

1

Choose one:

- Brisk outdoor walking
- Incline treadmill walking
- Stationary bike
- Elliptical
- Stair walking
- Weighted-vest walking

2

OPTION 1:

Steady State

 25–45 minutes

Maintain a moderate pace you can sustain.

OPTION 2:

Walking Intervals

5-minute warm-up

Then:

- 2 minutes brisk
- 1 minute easy
- Repeat 6–10 times.
- Finish with 5 minutes easy

OPTION 3:

Incline/Resistance Intervals

If you're already accustomed to exercise:

- 2–3 minutes moderate effort
- 1 minute increased incline or resistance
- Repeat

ABOUT WEIGHTED VESTS

A weighted vest can be an excellent prehab tool for the right patient—but it is optional.

It can add resistance to:

- Walking
- Squats
- Sit-to-stands
- Step-ups
- Controlled household movement

Do not begin with a heavy vest simply because you can tolerate it. Start conservatively and assess how your joints, balance, breathing, and overall body respond. You should still be able to walk with normal posture and mechanics.

No Gym? No Problem.

Movement	Home	Gym
Squat	Chair/air squat	Goblet squat
Loaded squat	Backpack/weighted vest	Dumbbells/kettlebell
Hinge	Backpack RDL	Dumbbell/kettlebell RDL
Step	Stairs/sturdy step	Step-up box
Glutes	Floor bridge	Hip thrust
Carry	Grocery bags/backpack	Dumbbells/kettlebells
Core	Dead bug/bird dog	Cable/band variations
Cardio	Outdoor walking	Treadmill/bike/elliptical

Your “Ready for Recovery” Functional Checklist

This isn’t a medical clearance test, and there is no required score. Instead, use it to recognize what you’ve built.

WHEN APPROPRIATE FOR YOUR ABILITIES, CAN YOU:

- ☐ Rise from a sturdy chair repeatedly with control?
- ☐ Walk continuously for 20–30 minutes at a comfortable pace?
- ☐ Navigate a flight of stairs without feeling winded
- ☐ Perform a controlled squat or sit-to-stand without using your hands for balance
- ☐ Carry a light load while walking without losing your grip
- ☐ Maintain controlled breathing during moderate activity?
- ☐ Recover appropriately after your workouts?
- ☐ Perform your PREHAB movements with confidence?

Every improvement represents additional capacity you’ve built before surgery. Happy Healing!



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