

# Heal Better Feel Better

## After Surgery



# Our Partners



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**Orgs**  
Public & private  
organizations

**Patients**

**Transforming health behaviors using a human-centered design approach**

**Founded in 2021**

**Healthy Behaviors of Michigan (HBOM) promotes healthy behaviors that enhance high value care across the BCBSM CQI portfolio through design and innovation.**



Tobacco  
Cessation



Healthy  
Eating



Physical  
Activity

Heal Better Feel Better





**HEAL BETTER**  
Feel Better After Surgery

How might we  
**help patients heal  
better and feel  
better after surgery?**

# Next Steps

## Talking to Surgeons

There's a critical gap between what care teams know and the time and resources needed to support patients in making a change.

*"I use a risk calculator with the patient to highlight the importance of weight loss prior to surgery. But sometimes I feel terrible, like I'm harping on them, when we don't have access to a weight loss or pre-hab clinic."*

*"We just don't have time."*



Key Barriers:  
**Time & Resources**

Next Steps

# Talking to Care Navigators

Want to offer patients support to ensure a strong recovery and return to treatment after surgery but may not always have resources.

“Patients are dealing with so much, beyond their cancer care. Social isolation, chronic disease management, access to transportation. I’m proud that I’ve been able to improve continuity of care and address some of their roadblocks.”



Key Barriers:  
**Resources**


# Next Steps

## Talking to Patients

To fully embrace health behavior change, patients need to feel respected and understood.

“The surgeons, as brilliant as they are...I don’t know how you bring that human element into having these discussions.”

“My biggest issue, the dietitian or nurse, was talking from their life point of view. Why not give her a list of options that fit her life? And that she can like, actually do?...It’s a whole respect thing.”

A photograph of three women laughing together outdoors. The woman in the center has short white hair and is wearing a pink scarf. The woman on the right has dark curly hair and is wearing a grey hoodie. The woman on the left is partially visible, also laughing.

Key Barriers:  
**Ways to make  
recommendations &  
resources feel  
relevant/accessible**

## Next Steps

# Reviewing the Literature

Ensure patients receive education and support on **evidence based and clinically proven ways to accelerate and enhance healing.**

Nutrition

Sleep

Stress Reduction

Tobacco Cessation

Social Support

Alcohol Cessation

Strength

Glucose Control

Movement

HBOM partnered with MSQC to offer Heal Better Feel Better support to general surgery patients starting at 2 Promedica sites.



David Diep, DO  
MSQC Surgeon Champion

# Big thanks to the Promedica team!



**Susanna Fortney, BSN, RN**  
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Adrian, MI*



**Laura Cousino, MSN, RN**  
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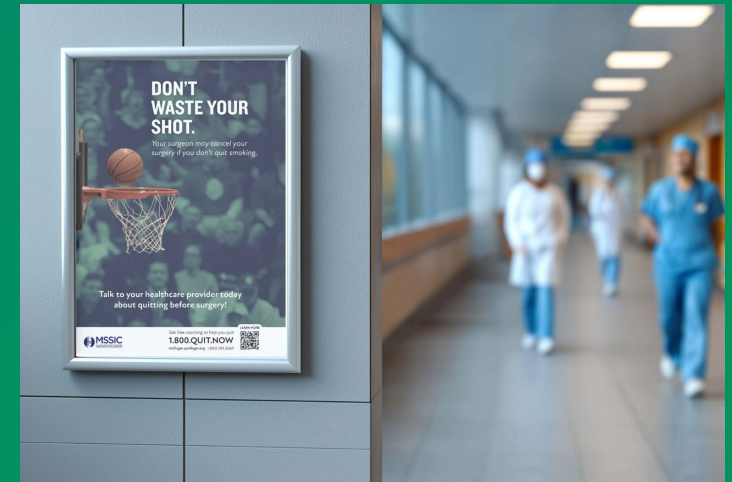
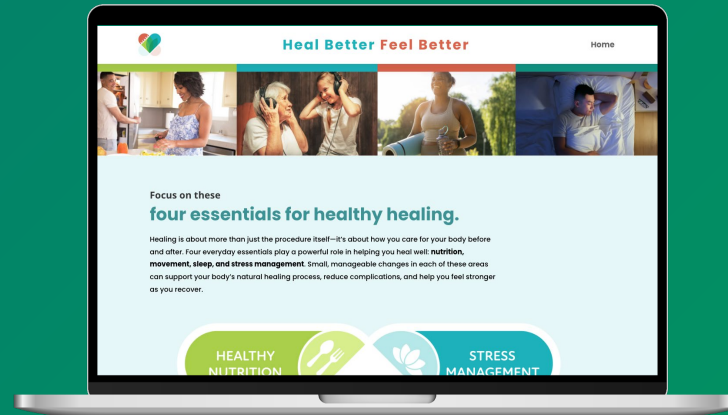


**David Diep, DO**  
**General Surgeon**  
*ProMedica Charles and Virginia  
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**Michael Charboneau, DO**  
**General Surgeon**  
*ProMedica Monroe Regional  
Hospital  
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# Ensuring every patient has the information they need to heal better



Gold Standard Resources

Interactive Online Platform

Tailored Implementation



# Essentials for Healthy Healing

## Focusing on 4 areas of healing

+ alcohol & tobacco cessation, weight loss, social support, and more.



# Heal Better Handout

Launched October 2025

All-in-one resource for sharing healthy healing information with patients at pre-surgical appointments or at discharge.



## HEAL BETTER, FEEL BETTER

After Surgery Essentials

**HEALTHY NUTRITION** **STRESS MANAGEMENT**  
**MOVEMENT** **SLEEP**

**ESSENTIALS FOR HEALTHY HEALING**

**Surgery puts everything into perspective.** It can be an opportunity to make small but meaningful changes from learning more about your health to stopping smoking, losing weight, or reaching out to a loved one.


Before surgery, what is one change you made to your diet, activity, health management, or outlook on life? *Write it down:*

What would it look like if you continued on that path and even explored more options? This is an opportunity to turn short-term success into long-term transformation.

This guide will get you started. Try out some of these tips over the next 2-4 weeks to begin building healthy habits and routines. With **Heal Better, Feel Better** you get to decide what this next chapter looks like!

**Find more tips and tools at [www.heal-better.org](http://www.heal-better.org)**

Use your phone camera to scan the QR code to the right.



### NUTRITION

Healing your surgical wound starts with three nutritional building blocks:

- CALORIES**  
Gives you the energy to heal and function
- PROTEIN**  
Helps you repair old tissue and create new tissue
- VITAMINS & MINERALS**  
Combats infection and helps your cells regenerate

#### EAT ENOUGH PROTEIN

Protein is critical to healing after surgery. Make sure to add lots of protein-rich foods to your diet and try to eat at least 50g of protein per day.

#### HYDRATE

Drinking enough water helps your body bounce back after surgery and prevents complications like blood clots.

#### MANAGE YOUR BLOOD SUGAR

Keeping your blood sugar "in range" will help you feel better, have more energy, and can even help prevent infection. Try to avoid or reduce highly processed and sugary foods or drinks in your diet.

#### FOCUS ON FOODS THAT CONTAIN:

- Vitamin C:** Boosts your immune system and reduces the chance of infection.
- Vitamin A:** Helps speed up healing by increasing collagen development.
- Zinc and Iron:** Supports the growth of strong, healthy tissue.

#### TRY THESE FOODS:

**Get your protein**

- Eggs, beans, lentils, fish, chicken, beef
- Add a handful of nuts or seeds to your meal
- Snack on cottage cheese, nut butters, and greek yogurt

**Boost your vitamin C**

- Fruits like oranges, strawberries
- Spinach, tomatoes, broccoli, and bell pepper

**Boost your vitamin A**

- Mango, peaches, and pumpkin
- Carrots
- Cheese, eggs (also filled with zinc!)

### STRESS MANAGEMENT

Your mental well-being has a big impact on healing. Managing stress after surgery has been shown to decrease possible complications, help you heal faster, reduce pain, and have better overall outcomes.

#### SPEND TIME OUTSIDE

Sitting on your porch, going to a park, or even looking at pictures of nature (like in a movie or video game) has been shown to help speed up your recovery and reduce the need for pain medications.

#### CONNECT WITH FRIENDS & FAMILY

Feeling support and connection to others can help you heal more effectively. Reach out to a friend or family member and be open, and if you are able, let them know the support you may need. Spend time with pets that provide comfort and companionship.

#### CREATIVE EXPRESSION

Believe it or not, journaling has been shown to increase the speed of wound healing. Take a few minutes each day to write about your thoughts and feelings after surgery.

#### LISTEN TO MUSIC

It seems simple, but listening to music can reduce stress, anxiety, and depression. Multiple studies have shown that it can also help reduce your pain after surgery, so get that favorites playlist queued up!

### MOVEMENT

Movement is key to recovering from surgery. Even small amounts can help your blood circulate, improve your lung and heart function, reduce your pain, and lead to stronger tissue growth. *Consult your doctor before starting a new fitness routine, and yourself and your care team: What kind of movement can I make a part of my daily routine before and after surgery?*

#### 1-4 Weeks After Surgery

Start moving as soon as you are able after surgery. Focus on increasing your range of motion and the steps you take each day. Start with small, gentle movements and slowly increase as you feel comfortable. Incorporate light exercise such as walking or household chores.

#### 5-8 Weeks After Surgery


Gradually increase the amount of time you spend active. Maybe challenge yourself to walk a little more each day. Continue to stretch or do other range of motion exercises appropriate for your surgery.

### SLEEP

Sleep supports your post-surgery recovery, but surgery can also disrupt your usual sleeping habits, making it harder to get quality rest. Commit to healthy sleep practices and check with your doctor if you experience sleep apnea or other conditions affecting your sleep.

#### SLEEP HYGIENE CHECKLIST

- Sleep at least 8 hours per day (this can include naps!)
- Follow a consistent sleep schedule
- Keep screens out of your bedroom, including TVs and phones
- Don't eat a big meal or exercise before bed
- Keep your bedroom cool, dark, and quiet
- Avoid alcohol, caffeine, or nicotine before bedtime
- Find ways to get lots of natural light during the day



#### QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR CARE TEAM IF YOU...

- Smoke or vape**  
*What are options to help me quit?*
- Drink or use drugs**  
*What are the risks of alcohol, cannabis, or other drugs on my healing? How can I get help to quit?*
- Take supplements**  
*Will these interact with my medications or healing?*
- Have trouble affording medications, groceries, transportation, rent, or housing**  
*I'm struggling. Who can I talk to?*

# Heal Better Handout

Launched October 2025

All-in-one resource for sharing healthy healing information with patients at pre-surgical appointments or at discharge.

## ALCOHOL

Drinking alcohol after surgery can delay healing, making it harder for the body to grow new tissue. It also puts you at greater risk for blood clots. It's best to avoid alcohol for 5-6 weeks after surgery.



At least 1 in every 10 adults struggles with their alcohol use, and 40% say they're trying to drink less this year.

### CHECK YOURSELF

It can be hard to know if you have a problem. Check your drinking profile using a free, interactive self-test like AUDIT (see right).

### SHARING IS CARING

It's important to inform your surgeon about your alcohol use to ensure the safest and most effective care. Your care team is invested in your healthy outcomes after surgery. They can guide you to the best treatments and resources.

### ENJOY RESPONSIBLY

More and more Americans are consuming non-alcoholic (NA) beverages. From zero proof spirits to NA beer and wine, the options have skyrocketed. Check out the NA section of your favorite beverage store, bar, or restaurant. You'll be pleasantly surprised.

## WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

Losing weight and maintaining a healthy weight is a lifelong pursuit. It pays off, both in short-term benefits after surgery and in long-term health and well-being. *Consult with your healthcare provider before starting any weight loss program.*

*"There's no time like the present, No present like time."*

### WEIGHT LOSS SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Many insurance plans cover weight loss support, which can include nutrition support from a dietitian, counseling from health coaches, group peer support, digital coaching, and even free or discounted home scales.

**Check your insurance coverage.** Call the number on the back of your insurance card. Ask for more information about obesity counseling and weight management services. These services are often free, as part of your preventative care health benefits.



## SUBSTANCE USE RESOURCES

- Check your drinking with **AUDIT**, a free, interactive self-test recommended by physicians: [auditscreen.org/check-your-drinking/](https://auditscreen.org/check-your-drinking/)
- Find a **substance use support program in your area** using the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services MISUD Locator [www.michigan.gov/opioids/find-help/misud-locator](https://www.michigan.gov/opioids/find-help/misud-locator)
- Reach out for support via **SAMHSA's National Helpline**. 1-800-662-HELP (4357) is a free 24/7 confidential referral and information line for individuals and families experiencing mental health and/or substance use issues.

## SMOKING CESSATION RESOURCES

- Start with the **Michigan Quitlink** 1-800-QUIT-NOW or [michigan.quitlogix.org](https://michigan.quitlogix.org). Connect with free live coaching by phone, email, or text message and access free starter nicotine replacement therapies, like gums and patches. Hear how others in your area are successfully quitting, with peer support.

## HEALTHY FOOD RESOURCES

- Michigan 211** A statewide directory of community resources, including home-delivered meals, fruit and vegetable boxes, and pantries. Search by zip code: [mi211.org](https://mi211.org)

Find more tips and tools at [www.heal-better.org](https://www.heal-better.org)

Use your phone camera to scan the QR code to the right.



## MY HEAL BETTER PLAN

### MY SURGEON

Dr. \_\_\_\_\_

Surgery Phone Number & Address

( ) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

### MY SUPPORTERS

Who can I contact if I need immediate help in an emergency?

Who can drive me to appointments?

**On My Surgery Day:** Who will stay with me at the hospital during my surgery?

**After Surgery:** Who will help me with daily tasks, like getting food and medications from the store, cleaning, or personal needs?

### MY QUESTIONS

My favorite **protein-rich foods**:

My favorite **vitamin-rich foods**:

How will I stay hydrated?

My favorite **movement activities**:

What **time(s) of day** will I move?

How will I **recover** after movement?

Who in my life gets me moving?

My favorite ways to **relax, find enjoyment, connect to others, and myself**:

Who can I reach out to for a laugh, support, or understanding?

What do I need to **sleep well after surgery**?

When is my goal bedtime?



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**HEALTH INSURANCE CONTACT INFO**

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**MY HEAL BETTER PLAN**

**MY SURGEON**

Dr. \_\_\_\_\_

Surgery Phone Number & Address

( ) -

My favorite **protein-rich foods**:

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How will I stay hydrated?

How will I **recover** after movement?

**Who** can I reach out to for a laugh, support, or understanding?

**When** is my goal bedtime?

**MY QUESTIONS**

**HEAL BETTER, FEEL BETTER**  
After Surgery Essentials

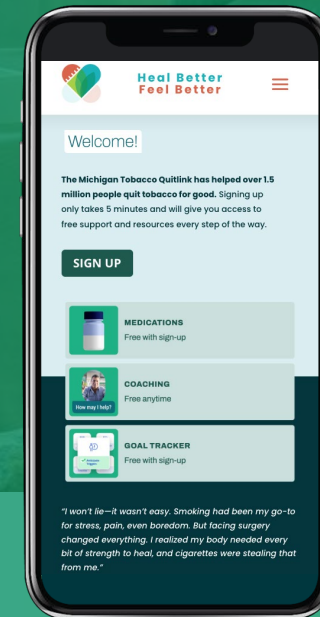
**PROMEDICA**

**HBOM**  
HEALTH BEHAVIOR OPTIMIZATION FOR MEDICINE

# Heal Better Platform

www.heal-better.org

A **one-stop-shop online resource platform** to help optimize patients before and heal after surgery.



# Patient-Friendly Welcome

[www.heal-better.org](http://www.heal-better.org)

Patient-friendly  
overview on how each  
topic impacts healing,  
including audio  
“welcome.”



The screenshot shows the top of the Heal Better website. On the left is a logo consisting of overlapping colored shapes (red, green, blue, yellow). On the right is the text "Heal Better". Below the logo is a light orange bar containing an audio player. The player has a "Pause" button, the text "Listen to an audio introduction to this page", a "View Transcript" link, and a "Playback speed: 1x" dropdown menu. Below the audio player is a white box with rounded corners containing the text: "The first step of quitting is easy: **sign up for support through the Quitlink**". Below this box is a paragraph: "Follow the link below to sign up for free individualized coaching, medication, and other resources."

# Built-In Self Assessment Tools

[www.heal-better.org](http://www.heal-better.org)

Change starts with understanding yourself. Use Heal Better's built-in:

- AUDIT-C for alcohol risk
- MUST for malnutrition

## What's your risk?

It can be hard to know if you have a problem. Check your drinking profile using a free, interactive self-test like AUDIT-C. The AUDIT-C is a simple, **three-question screening tool** designed to help understand your typical alcohol use. Here is why this short test is so helpful:

- **It Helps You Understand the Risk of Complications:** Patients with a score of **5 or higher** are more likely to experience complications like infections or wound issues. If your score is **9 or higher**, you may face an even higher risk of needing a longer hospital stay or time in the intensive care unit.
- **It Helps You Take Control:** By identifying a high score early, you have an opportunity to make changes. Knowing your risk level allows you to work with your care team on a "prehabilitation" plan, such as reducing or stopping alcohol for 4 to 8 weeks before surgery, to significantly **lower your chances of infection and improve your healing**.

### Get Your Alcohol Risk Score (AUDIT-C)

It only takes about 1 minute.

Hide questions ^

Tip: If you're not sure, choose the answer that fits **most** of the time.

Think about your drinking over the past year. A "drink" usually means one beer, one glass of wine, or one shot.

**1) How often do you have a drink containing alcohol?**

# Choose Your Own (Healing) Adventure

[www.heal-better.org](http://www.heal-better.org)

Interactive tools allow individuals to customize their learning journey, identify their unique strengths and goals, and come to behavior change on their own terms. Build your Heal Better:

- Grocery List
- Sleep Plan
- Tobacco Quit Plan
- And more...

The screenshot displays the Heal Better website interface. At the top, the logo features a heart with a sawtooth pattern, and the text 'Heal Better Feel Better' is visible. A hamburger menu icon is on the right. The main content is split into two panels. The left panel, titled 'Build and save your quit plan', includes a sub-header 'Build and save your quit plan', a paragraph: 'Use the form below to create a quit plan. Then sign it to make a contract with yourself. We all that you share it with your doctor.', a 'Hide Quit Plan' button, a text input field for 'What is your why? What is your #1 reason quit?', and a section 'Check off or list the things you plan to do quit:' with checkboxes for 'Pick a quit date', 'Tell family and friends who are your quit support', 'Enroll in the Michigan Tobacco Quitlink', and 'Plan for...'. The right panel, titled 'Build a surgical healing grocery list', includes a sub-header 'Build a surgical healing grocery list', a paragraph: 'Use the form below to build a surgical healing grocery list that you can download and take with you to the store.', a testimonial: '“When my doctor first told me to focus on nutrition before surgery, I honestly thought it wouldn’t make a big difference. But as I started eating more protein, fresh fruits and vegetables, and staying on top of my meals, I began to feel stronger and more prepared. After my operation, I could tell right away—I had more energy, my incision healed faster than I expected, and I bounced back sooner. Taking care of my nutrition beforehand really helped me feel like I was actively part of my own recovery.”', a 'Hide Grocery List' button, and a section 'Build your recovery grocery list. Select items you want from the list, add any custom items, then download a PDF to take to the store.' at the bottom, with buttons for 'Select all', 'Clear all', and '0 selected'.

# Quick & Easy Tips

[www.heal-better.org](http://www.heal-better.org)

Clear explanations and tips on how patients can start small to improve their healing.

Making the fundamentals digestible:

## Quick and easy nutrition tips for better healing

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### Eat enough protein

- **Plan your meals around high-quality protein sources** like eggs, tofu, lean meat, beans, or fish. Eat your protein first in case you get full.
- **Add a handful of nuts or seeds to your meals** (like yogurt, salads, cereals) for an extra boost of protein and fiber.
- **Stock your kitchen with high-protein snacks** that you can eat throughout the day, like peanut butter, cottage cheese, protein bars, and Greek yogurt.
- **Talk to your care team about adding protein supplements** like protein shakes or powders to your diet.



# Connect to Experts

[www.heal-better.org](http://www.heal-better.org)

- MI Tobacco Quitlink
- SAMHSA's National Helpline

The first step of quitting is easy:

## sign up for support through the Quitlink

Follow the link below to sign up for free individualized coaching, medications, and other resources.

You can call or text

**1-800-QUIT-NOW  
(784.8669)**



Welcome!

**The Michigan Tobacco Quitlink has helped over 1.5 million people quit tobacco for good.** Signing up only takes 5 minutes and will give you access to free support and resources every step of the way.

**SIGN UP**

*"I won't lie—it wasn't easy. Smoking had been my go-to for stress, pain, even boredom. But facing surgery changed everything. I realized my body needed every bit of strength to heal, and cigarettes were stealing that from me."*

### Here's what helped me quit and stay quit:

I made the surgery my turning point. I told myself: "If I'm strong enough to go through surgery, I'm strong enough to quit." That shift in mindset made a huge difference.

### I leaned into the 'why'.

My recovery mattered more than a cigarette ever could. Smoking would slow healing, increase infection risk, and keep my body inflamed. I kept reminding myself: "Each day I don't

After surgery, we tend to think about surgical wound care, what we need to avoid, and how to keep pain in check. But there's so much more that contributes to the healing journey after surgery and beyond! This initiative highlights these healthy behaviors, provides helpful tips, and valuable resources.”

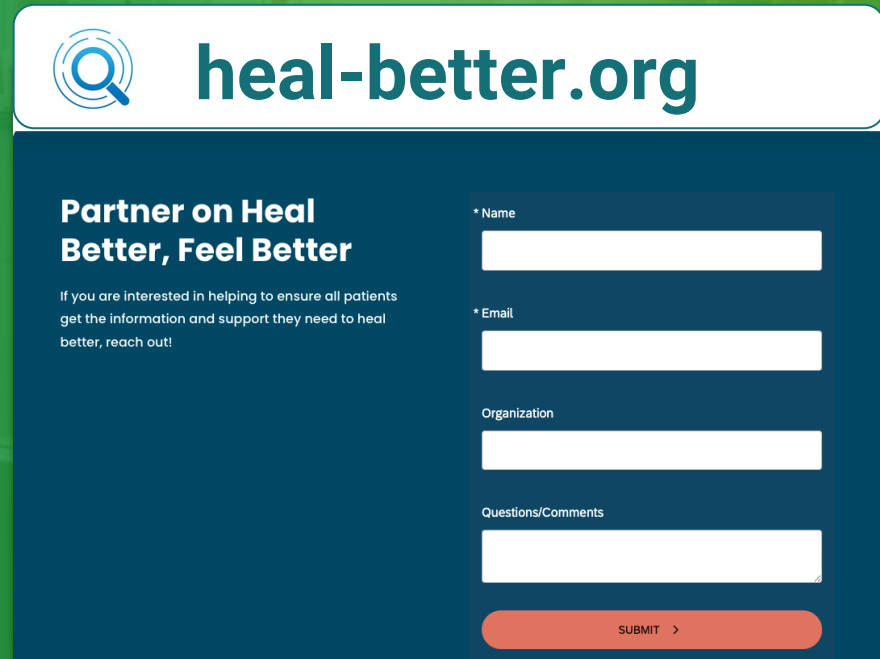
SUSANNA FORTNEY, BSN, RN  
ProMedica



# Thank you!

Questions? Interested in partnering?

[info@hbomich.org](mailto:info@hbomich.org)



The screenshot shows a web form for partnering with heal-better.org. At the top left is a magnifying glass icon. To its right is the text "heal-better.org". Below this is a dark blue header with the text "Partner on Heal Better, Feel Better" in white. Underneath the header is a small paragraph: "If you are interested in helping to ensure all patients get the information and support they need to heal better, reach out!". To the right of this text are four white input fields: "Name", "Email", "Organization", and "Questions/Comments". At the bottom right of the form is a red "SUBMIT" button with a right-pointing arrow.

