

Questions You May Have About Your Surgery

This pamphlet includes some common questions about having surgery. We hope it will help you think about questions you may have about your own surgery. Please use the spaces in this pamphlet to write down your questions. Feel free to also bring a notebook with you to your appointments to make notes.



Questions You May Have About Your Surgery

You are an important and valued member of your health care team. Although you may have learned a lot from your health care team about your condition and surgery options, it is natural to have questions. It is important to ask any questions you have when you meet with your health care team or any hospital staff.

Asking questions will help you to be fully informed and ready before, during, and after your surgery. Write down your questions, and bring a pen or pencil to make notes when you meet with your surgeon. You may also want to bring a support person(s) with you.

Understanding your surgery

- Why are you recommending this surgery for me?
 - How is this surgery expected to help my condition?
 - Are there treatment options other than surgery?
 - If I decide not to have surgery, what can I expect? If I change my mind, can I have surgery in the future?
 - Is there anything I can do to help my condition if I decide not to have surgery?
 - What are the risks and benefits of this surgery?
 - How long does it normally take to recover from this surgery?
 - Will I need to take time off from work or school after my surgery? Are there any forms I need to have signed by my surgeon?
 - What is the most challenging part of recovery from this surgery?
 - Are there any possible complications? How often do they happen?
 - What symptoms might I have after this surgery?
 - Will I need any other treatment?
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Getting ready for your surgery

- How long should I expect to wait for an appointment for my surgery?
- Is there anything I can do to help my condition while I wait for surgery?
- Are there any tests or blood work I need to do before my surgery?
- After I get my surgery date or I am admitted to the hospital, is it possible that my surgery could be delayed?
- How will I know if my surgery is cancelled? Will someone call me?
- If my surgery is cancelled, will the delay put me at risk?
- Do I need to stop eating or drinking before my surgery? When? Can I drink water? Can I take my medication(s)? Can I chew gum or eat candy?

- Are there any medications I should take or stop taking? How long before surgery should I stop taking them?
 - What do I need to bring when I come for surgery? Should I bring my medication(s)? What should I bring to wear after my surgery?
 - Is there anything that I should not bring with me to the hospital (like jewelry, cash)?
 - Will the surgeon talk with my support person(s) after my surgery?
 - Should I plan to go home after surgery, or will I need to stay in the hospital overnight or longer?
 - If the plan is for me to go home after surgery, is there still a chance I could be admitted to the hospital? Will someone call my support person(s) if this happens?
 - If I will be staying in the hospital after my surgery, how long will I be expected to stay for?
 - Do I need someone to drive me home after my surgery?
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What to expect during and right after your surgery

- How long should I expect my surgery to last?
 - Will I be under full anesthetic (unconscious) during surgery? If not, what should I expect? Will I be fully awake and alert, or will I be sleepy?
 - Will I feel any pain during surgery?
 - How can I manage my fears about having surgery?
 - Will I have an intravenous (I.V.) tube inserted (put in) in a vein in my hand or arm? Will I have other lines, drains, or tubes? What are they for?
 - How will my loved ones get information on my progress during my surgery?
 - Where can my loved ones wait in the hospital for me while I am having surgery?
 - When will I be able to see my loved ones after surgery?
 - How will my loved ones know where to visit me after surgery?
 - If I am staying in the hospital overnight, are there accommodations available for my loved ones to stay nearby?
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What to expect as you recover

- How can I expect to feel after the anesthetic wears off?
- How much pain or discomfort can I expect after surgery? For how long?
- What can I do to help my pain at home? Will I get a prescription for pain medication? Will over-the-counter pain medication help? (Please tell your health care team about any pain medication(s) that you know works well or does not work for you.)
- When will I be discharged from the hospital?
- Should I keep taking my usual medication(s)?
- Are there any symptoms I should watch for after surgery?
- Will I need physiotherapy or other support services or equipment to help me recover?
- Can I do my usual activities while I recover? Which activities should I stop doing? Can I lift things (like groceries or a child)? How much can I lift (5 pounds, 10 pounds)?
- When can I go back to my usual activities (like work, driving, having sex, exercise)?
- When will I have a follow-up appointment with my surgeon? How many follow-up appointments will I have?
- If I do not have a primary health care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner), who should I follow up with after my surgery?
- Who do I call if I have questions or concerns?

What other questions do you have? Please ask. We're here to help.

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here:
<https://library.nshealth.ca/Patients-Guides>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

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