

Increase Safety Before Surgery

Talk To Your Health Care Team

How You are Feeling

Surgery can be a very stressful and confusing time for you and your family. There may be many things to plan, changes to make, questions to ask.

Your health care team wants you to be as comfortable as possible before your surgery. If you are feeling nervous, worried or unsure about any part of your surgery or recovery, please tell your health care team.

Ask Questions

If you have any questions about your health, surgery or recovery, ask your doctor or nurse. They are available to help answer your questions. No question should go unasked.

Questions may pop into your head at any time. If you don't think you can remember them, write them down.

When you ask questions, be sure your health care team members give you answers in terms and words you understand. If they don't, keep asking until you understand.

You may have a family member or other chosen person present when you talk with your health care team if you wish.

Remember: you are an important member of your health care team. Don't assume the health care team members know how you are feeling. You know best what is happening with your body. If something doesn't feel right, if you have a question, or if you hear something that is not right, speak up.

You won't offend any member of your health care team by asking questions. Together, you all can help take steps to make your surgery as safe as possible.

Informed Consent

You will be asked to sign an informed consent form. It lists:

- your name
- the kind of surgery you are having
- the reason for surgery
- that you talked to your doctor about the surgery and asked questions
- that you agree to have surgery
- that you agree to have blood products used, if needed
- that you have the right to speak up and ask questions up to the moment your procedure starts.

Please read the form (or have a family member or hospital representative read it to you). Make sure the information is correct. Make sure all of your questions have been answered. If you need help understanding anything on the form, please ask.

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Questions You Will Be Asked

Members of your health care team may ask you the same four questions many times before your surgery. This is to help ensure your safety. The questions are:

- Who are you?
- What are your allergies?
- What kind of surgery are you having?
- What part of your body will you be having surgery?

Marking of Your Surgery Site

Another important step in your safety is marking the surgery site.

- In most procedures, the surgeon will mark the area near your surgery site. Make sure the surgeon marks the correct site and nowhere else. For instance, if you are having a left knee replacement, make sure your left knee is marked. Markings usually wash off within a few days but can last up to a few weeks.
- Marking usually happens when you are awake. If you cannot be awake for the marking, a family member, friend or a member of the health care team can watch the marking. That person can make sure that your correct body part is marked.
- Your neck, upper back or lower back will be marked if you are having spine surgery. The surgeon will check the exact place on your spine in the operating room after you are asleep. He or she will use X-ray to locate the correct level of the spine.
- Ask your surgeon if he or she will do a “time out” before surgery. This is done to make sure the health care team is doing the correct surgery on the correct body part on the correct person.

After Your Surgery

Members of your health care team will monitor you after surgery.

- Tell your doctor or nurse about your pain. Your health care team wants to make sure your pain is managed and you are as comfortable as possible.
- Ask questions about your medicines, especially if they are new.
 - What is it called?
 - What is it for?
 - What are the side effects?
 - How do I take it?
 - Will it interfere with my other medicines?

Tell your health care team about any allergies to medicines you have. If you have questions about a medicine, ask your doctor or nurse before taking it.

- Ask your doctor if you will need therapy or medicines after you leave the hospital.
- Ask your doctor when you can return to your regular activities such as work, driving and exercise.
- Ask your nurse questions about your incision care, diet or follow-up appointment(s).

Whom to Talk to About Concerns

If you have concerns about the quality or safety of care you received, report concerns to your nurse or to the hospital’s Patient Representative Office.