

Surgery Checklist

When your doctor says, "You need surgery," that's your cue to find out every pertinent detail. Be inquisitive and be thorough, with a notebook, tape recorder and your health care advocate right by your side.



Here are the key questions you should ask before undergoing any surgery:

1. Can you review in layman's terms why I need this surgery?

2. What'll happen if I don't have it done?

3. What are the alternatives to surgery, and the pros and cons of each?

4. What are the risks of the surgery?

5. Where is the absolute best place to have this done besides here?

6. How many of these specific surgeries does this hospital do a year? How many times have you performed this procedure?

7. How do your results in this operation compare with those of other surgeons?

8. How long will I be in the hospital?

9. Is it possible to do this on an outpatient basis, and if so, would that be smart? Is this outpatient surgery facility in my health plan's coverage network?

10. Can this be done under local anesthesia instead of general?

11. What kinds of complications do your patients most frequently experience from this surgery?

12. What should I do and not do immediately before and after surgery? (Find out about food, alcohol, medications, sex, exercise and other activities.)

13. How much pain will I be in after surgery? What painkillers will I be given during and after surgery?

14. How long will I be laid up after this surgery—meaning, flat on my back—or really unable to get around easily?

15. Whom should I call after surgery if I have questions, or if I experience something unexpected?

16. Do I need to contact or notify my insurance company prior to scheduling the surgery?

Notes:
