Preparing ahead of time for your surgery can help you feel more in control and may help you recover faster. It’s important to take the time to talk with your doctor before your surgery. Find out everything you can about why your doctor is recommending the surgery, what will happen before and during the procedure, and what you can expect afterward.

Preparing for Surgery

Ask Questions

It’s normal to have a lot of questions about your surgery, so don’t be afraid to talk to your doctor. The more you know about the surgery, the better you’ll feel. Here are some questions you may want to ask:

**What are the risks and benefits of this surgery?**
Understanding these can help you feel more informed and confident about your decision to have the surgery. It can also help prepare you for any complications.

**What’s your doctor’s experience with this surgery?**
Ask your doctor how many times he’s performed this surgery before and what the results have been.

**What types of tests do you need?**
You may need tests before and after your surgery.

**Will you be put under general or local anesthesia?**
Anesthesia keeps your body from feeling any pain. With general anesthesia, you’ll feel like you’re asleep. With local anesthesia, only the part of your body that’s being operated on will be numb. Find out which type of anesthesia, if any, will be used, and ask if it’s safe with any other medical conditions you have or medicines you take. You can also ask to speak with the doctor who will be in charge of the anesthesia, called an anesthesiologist.

**Is the surgery inpatient or outpatient?**
If it’s inpatient, how long will you need to stay in the hospital?

**Is the surgery covered by your insurance?**
You or your doctor’s office will probably need to check with your insurance company before you have the surgery to get approval. Ask what steps you need to take to make sure everything is settled with your insurance company before your surgery.

Prepare for Your Surgery

Getting ready for your surgery and hospital stay can be less stressful if you plan ahead. Remember these tips as you get ready:

- **Pack the basics.** If you’re going to stay overnight, bring pajamas, underwear, slippers and any personal care items. Also remember to pack loose-fitting clothes and comfortable shoes for when you leave.

- **Leave valuables at home.** Don’t bring along expensive jewelry or electronics with you.

- **Follow eating instructions.** Your doctor will probably tell you not to eat or drink for a specific amount of time before your surgery. Be sure to follow your doctor’s instructions exactly.

(continued on other side)
**Advance Directives**

You may want to prepare an advance directive before your surgery. This is a legal document that states how you want to be treated if you can no longer speak for yourself.

There are two types of advance directives:

1. **A living will** outlines your wishes for the use of life support if you have an incurable, life-threatening condition and can no longer make your own decisions.

2. **A durable power of attorney** for healthcare means you give a friend or family member permission to make your medical decisions if you can no longer make them.

Talk to your doctor if you have questions about advance directives.

To learn more, visit:

- **Agency for Healthcare and Research and Quality**  
  www.ahrq.gov
- **MedlinePlus**  
  www.medlineplus.gov

---

**Make a list of your medicines.** There are some medicines that your doctor may want you to stop taking several days before your surgery. Tell your doctor about any prescription, over-the-counter and herbal medicines you’re taking, and also review them with your anesthesiologist.

**Don’t wear makeup or jewelry.** You’ll need to remove all makeup, nail polish and jewelry before your surgery.

**Take out contacts and dentures.** Wear glasses instead of contact lenses on the day of your surgery, and plan to remove your dentures.

---

**After Your Surgery**

Planning for your recovery—whether it’s at home or in the hospital—is an important part of preparing for your surgery.

- **Know your recovery time.** How long will it take? Will you need any type of therapy as part of your recovery?

- **Plan for your post-surgery needs.** Once you’re home, you may need to change your bandages, take specific medicines, go to follow-up appointments and more. Make sure you know what you’ll need to do and have someone who can help you.

- **Follow any diet restrictions.** Be prepared if your doctor wants you to follow a specific diet or avoid certain foods after surgery. Stock your shelves with items that have your doctor’s approval.

- **Don’t overdo it.** Your doctor will probably want you to take it easy for a few days—or longer—after your surgery. Ask about any activities you should avoid and for how long.

- **Have a support team in place.** Arrange for a ride home after your surgery and to any follow-up appointments that you can’t drive yourself to. Also, ask a family member or friend to stay with you for a day or two after your release if you’ll need extra help.

---

**Remember:**

- If you have questions, ask them. Your doctor is there to help you feel informed.

- Tell your doctor about any prescription, over-the-counter and herbal medicines you’re taking.

- Have a support team in place for when you’re released from the hospital.

This PatientPoint® handout may be reproduced for patient use and is provided courtesy of your doctor.