

# Having an Operation? Your Patient Journey

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Patient  
Liaison  
Group



The Royal College of Surgeons of England

This leaflet aims to help you find out what you need or want to know before having an operation. It takes you through the different stages and includes a list of questions you may find useful. You do not always have to ask lots of questions as the hospital staff will give you most of this information automatically. However, they may overlook things or believe you know them already, so do not feel embarrassed about asking questions. It is important that you know a certain amount of information before you sign a consent form, and, that you have the information you need to make your recovery as easy and free from worry as possible. At a time when you may be anxious it is difficult to remember everything. It is useful for you to take someone with you to help you remember.

## **Outpatient appointment/first consultation/second consultation**

You should be given information on and the opportunity to ask questions about: Why an operation is needed. What the different treatment options are and their benefits, possible risks and side effects. Who will be involved – who may perform the operation and other people in the team. Where the procedure will take place, and if it will be a day case or a longer stay in hospital. How the operation will be done. What type of anaesthetic will be used – regional, local or general. When the operation is likely to take place and waiting list information.

You may be given a copy of the first part of the consent form to take away and read, as well as some information on your treatment. Some tests may be arranged for you or even done at this stage. You will need to know if you can drive after them. You may have your operation booked or be asked to return for a further consultation.



## **Pre-admission check for your booked operation (if necessary)**

You may need to have various tests at this stage. Make sure that you know the results of any previous tests. You may be given information about pain control. You should be given clear instructions about whether you need to stop eating and drinking, and, if you have to stop taking any or all of your medicines, before coming into hospital. You need to know how long your stay in hospital is likely to be and what to bring with you. At any stage from now on you will be asked to sign the second part of the consent form giving your permission for the operation to take place, showing you understand what is to be done and that you still wish to proceed. Make sure you are given the opportunity to discuss any concerns and to ask any questions you still have before doing so.



## **Admission to hospital**

You will meet the nurses who will care for you and be told their names. You should feel free to ask any questions or discuss any concerns with the ward staff.

You will be asked to give important information about your medical history, including medication and allergies...possibly more than once, by the staff.

You will also be asked what name you like to be called during your stay.

Ask which ward you will return to after the operation (it may not be the same one that you are admitted to). If you are still uncertain about your operation you should ask to see one of the surgical team. If you have not signed the second part of your consent form yet you will be asked to do so by a member of the team. You will be confirming you understand what is to be done and that you still wish to proceed. As you meet various healthcare professionals during your stay, do not be afraid to ask who they are and what role they will have in your care. Before your operation you will see an anaesthetist, who will be giving your anaesthetic, and, advice about any pain and how it will be controlled after your operation



## **Immediately after the operation**

You will be told how the operation went. You should ask if what was planned to be done was achieved. You need to let the medical staff know if you are in any discomfort. You may be given more pain control information and medication. You should be told what you can and cannot do and information about your recovery. You may be seen by a physiotherapist or occupational therapist if this is necessary. You should feel free to ask any questions or discuss any concerns with the ward staff and members of the surgical team. As you recover it is important that you are clear about what has been done and what is the next move.



## **Discharge from hospital**

You should be given advice about your recovery at home. Make sure that you ask any questions you may have so that you know when to resume normal activities such as work, exercise, driving, housework and sexual intimacy. You will usually be given a contact number if you have any concerns once you are home. You will be told when your follow-up will be and if it is at the hospital or with your GP. If you have had tissues or organs removed make sure that you know when you will be told the results of any tests done on them.

## QUESTION PROMPT SHEET

*(You may find it helpful to use this question prompt sheet at consultations to note information given, what else you need to ask or to write your own questions.)*

### **During your first consultation and before admission to hospital**

- > What is my diagnosis and why do I need to have an operation?
- > What different types of treatment are available for my condition?
- > What are the benefits, side effects and risks of each of these treatments?
- > Do I have a choice of where the operation will take place?
- > Who will perform the operation?
- > What exactly does the surgery involve and how long will the operation take?
- > Will I need a local, regional or general anaesthetic?
- > Will I need any stitches and will there be any scarring?
- > How long is the waiting list for this operation?
- > How much notice will I have before coming into hospital?
- > How long before the operation will I need to stop eating and drinking?
- > How long will I need to stay in hospital?
- > What will I need to bring into hospital with me?
- > How long will it take to recover and get back to normal?
- > Will I need time off work and, if so, for how long? How will I get a sick note?
- > Will I be given a copy of the consent form and when will I give consent?
- > Where can I get more information on my condition, and, on the team looking after me?
- > What should I do if I want a second opinion?
- > Will I see you when I am in hospital?
- > When will I know if the operation is a success?
- > If there are problems with the operation how will it be sorted? And who will tell me about it?
- > Is there anything else you think I should know?

**Remember however that you may get information on the internet.**

Here are some useful sites to explore

[www.rcseng.ac.uk/patient\\_information/internet\\_sources](http://www.rcseng.ac.uk/patient_information/internet_sources)

[www.patient.co.uk](http://www.patient.co.uk)

[www.patientinformation.org.uk](http://www.patientinformation.org.uk)

[www.rcoa.ac.uk](http://www.rcoa.ac.uk) – information for patients about anaesthetics

[www.prodigy.nhs.uk/PILs](http://www.prodigy.nhs.uk/PILs)

[www.bma.org.uk](http://www.bma.org.uk) – Public Healthcare Information Section

[www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)

[www.besttreatments.co.uk](http://www.besttreatments.co.uk)

## **On Admission**

*The nurses will usually look after you now but you will be seen by a member of the surgical team and the anaesthetist. If appropriate agree with the doctor the site needing surgery.*

- > What happens now?
- > Can I still eat or drink?
- > What will I feel like after the operation?
- > How long will the effects of the anaesthetic last?
- > Will I feel any pain after the operation?
- > What should I do and who should I tell if I am in pain?
- > What are the visiting arrangements?
- > Will I return to the same ward after the surgery?
- > When will I see the consultant?
- > When will I know the results of any tests done?
- > When can I expect to go home after the operation?

## **After your operation and before leaving hospital**

- > Was the operation as successful as expected?
- > What should I be trying to do on my own, eg going to the bathroom or getting out of bed?
- > Is there anything I should avoid doing?
- > How long will it be before I am back to normal?
- > When will I be able to drive, exercise, do housework and have sexual intimacy?
- > How long before I can go back to work?
- > When and how long for will I need to take any extra medicines (if given)?
- > How much pain, bruising or swelling should I expect when I get home?
- > How will I expect to feel when I get home and for how long?
- > What will I be able or unable to do when I get home?
- > What side effects should I expect?
- > When and where will any stitches be removed?
- > Do I need to return to hospital or my GP for follow up and when will it be?
- > Who can I contact if I need advice when I get home?
- > Are there any facilities available for rehabilitation and support?
- > What can I do to prevent future problems?

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