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## Decisions about surgery

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### Summary

- You have a right to get a second opinion and to choose not to have a treatment that you feel uncomfortable with.
  - It is your surgeon's job to clearly explain all of your options.
  - Your surgeon will ask you to sign a form to say that you understand and agree to your surgery and the risks involved.
  - If you need some extra support when talking to your surgeon, you can ask someone like a friend or family member to help you.
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### Making your own healthcare decisions

Digital technology has made health information very easy to find and people are generally more informed about healthcare conditions and treatments than in the past.

However, understanding and acting on information about your health can be difficult. That's why it's important to work closely with qualified healthcare professionals because they can provide you with specific information related to your individual health conditions, treatment options and care needs.

You have the right to make your own decisions about your care, guided by the advice of health professionals. Make sure you fully understand your treatment options so you can consider the benefits and risks before you agree to any treatment.

### Questions to ask your surgeon or clinician

Before agreeing to any treatment, make sure you understand what it involves and any possible side effects. Also, ask about whether there are other options you can try.

Some questions to ask your surgeon or other relevant clinician include:

- Can you describe exactly what you are going to do?
- Are there any non-surgical options for treatment?
- What are the benefits and risks of each treatment option?
- What are the possible consequences of not having treatment?
- Will you or someone else perform the procedure?
- Do you perform many of these procedures?
- How long will I be in hospital?
- What will my out-of-pocket expenses be?
- Who else will be involved in my treatment (for example, an anaesthetist or a physiotherapist)?
- How can I expect to feel after surgery and how long will it take me to recover?
- Will I need help at home?
- Will I need rehabilitation?
- When will I be able to go back to work?
- What should I do if my condition gets worse while I am waiting for surgery?

Once you have asked your questions, it is often a good idea to take some time to think about the answers. Talk your options over with family and friends and, if you need to, ask the opinion of another healthcare professional.

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## Consenting to treatment

If you choose to go ahead with treatment, you will be asked to give your informed consent. This means that you understand your condition and any proposed treatment. Once you have all the information you need, the doctor will ask you to sign a consent form.

Before signing this consent form, it is your doctor's responsibility to clearly explain any information that relates to your medical condition and treatment, so you can make an informed decision.

It is your responsibility to make sure you understand the risks by asking as many questions as you need to. You can refuse or withdraw your consent at any time before the surgery.

If you are still unsure about the treatment options presented to you, you have the right to get a **second opinion** from another healthcare professional.

## Where to get help

- Your GP (doctor)
- Your surgeon
- Hospital staff

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