
Preparing for surgery

Summary

- The hospital will tell you how to prepare for your surgery, such as when you have to stop eating or drinking.
 - Once you are given your surgery date and time, it is important that you let the hospital know that you can come on that day so they do not cancel your booking for surgery.
 - For your peace of mind, make sure all the things you would normally have to do at home and work are taken care of while you are in hospital.
 - If you get sick just before your surgery, let the hospital know – you might need to have your surgery moved to another day.
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Undergoing surgery can be a challenging experience for many people. To get the best out of your recovery, it is important that you are as mentally and physically prepared as possible.

Communicating with the hospital

The hospital will call or send you a letter, email or text message to let you know your surgery date. This letter, email or text message will also tell you what time you need to arrive at the hospital and when you need to stop eating and drinking (called 'fasting') before your surgery.

Your hospital will usually ask you to contact them to confirm your admission date. This is important because if you don't, your surgery booking might be cancelled.

You may be asked to attend a 'pre-admission clinic' some time before your surgery. A letter, email or text message will explain these appointment details and where you need to go. At this clinic, a nurse will organise any tests you need, take your health history, give you information about what will happen during your stay and plan your discharge.

You may also be seen by an anaesthetist, the doctor who will give you the anaesthetic during surgery. If you do not need to go to a pre-admission clinic, the hospital may contact you to check you have all the information you need about your hospital stay.

Organising your other commitments

Preparing yourself mentally for surgery includes making sure all of your immediate out-of-hospital commitments will be taken care of while you are in hospital, so you can concentrate on your recovery. This will mean arranging time away from your work family and other commitments.

You may also need to organise for someone to look after your home if it is going to be left empty for more than a few days. This may include having someone collect your mail, water your plants and look after your pets. Depending on the length of your hospital stay, you may also want to ask that person to pay bills on your behalf.

Before your surgery

Make sure you have organised transport to the hospital on the day of your surgery as you will not be allowed to drive yourself home. Allow plenty of travel time and, if you are travelling by private car, factor in time for parking as well. Street parking is often limited around hospitals and paid parking can be expensive.

Your recovery will be quickest if you are as healthy as you can be before your surgery. If you are not feeling well in the days before your surgery, call the hospital and speak to your GP to let them know. For your own safety, your surgery may need to be postponed.

Surgery postponement

Sometimes surgery gets postponed. This can happen for many reasons, including the hospital having lots of emergency surgeries to perform.

If your surgery is postponed, your hospital will call or send you a letter, email or text message with a new surgery date. This can be very frustrating, but it is often unavoidable.

Where to get help

- Your hospital
- Your surgeon

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