

Getting Ready for Your Ambulatory Surgery

Whether you call it outpatient surgery, ambulatory surgery*, office surgery, or same-day surgery, it means the same thing: surgical procedures that don't require an overnight hospital stay.

Patients and their family members or friends are important members of the care team. The care team also includes the doctors, nurses, and other health care professionals who help take care of you. Your role in the care team is to take the time to learn about your surgery—how to prepare, what's going to happen, and what to expect afterward. If you have questions, ask! Speaking up if you are concerned about anything is one of the things you can do to stay safe.

Preparing for Your Surgery

Before any surgical procedure, your doctor might ask you to take certain steps to get ready for surgery. Here are some tips to make sure you're prepared.

- **Medical instructions:** Talk with your doctor about your medications well before your surgery. Your doctor may want to stop or change some medications such as blood thinners for a short time or may even want you to see another doctor before surgery. Your doctor's office will give you instructions to follow in the days before surgery. These instructions usually explain whether you need to stop medications or fill new prescriptions, when to stop eating and drinking before surgery, and other instructions. Be sure to follow all directions carefully. If you are confused about anything, call your doctor's office and ask questions.
- **Medication and allergy list:** Prepare an up-to-date list of your current medications and any allergies and bring it with you on the day of surgery.
- **Preventing infection:** Your doctor may give you a prescription for an antibiotic to take before your surgery to help prevent infection. Be sure to fill any prescriptions before surgery and follow directions as prescribed. Do not wear deodorant, lotion, or perfume on the day of your surgery. Your doctor may also ask you to bathe with antibacterial soap or solution.
- **Shaving:** Do not shave the area where you will have the surgery. If hair needs to be removed from the operating site, your care team will do this on the day of the surgery.
- **Tobacco and alcohol:** Do not use tobacco or drink alcohol for at least 24 hours before your surgery.
- **Fasting:** Ask your doctor how long you should go without eating or drinking before your surgery.
- **Personal items:** Be prepared to remove dentures, hearing aids, glasses, contact lenses, jewelry, and hair accessories. Leave them at home if you can. If you must wear them, bring a case to put them in while you have surgery (i.e., for glasses or contact lenses). Leave jewelry at home if you are concerned about losing it.

**Some procedures such as colonoscopies or endoscopies also are performed in ambulatory surgery centers. The tips in this booklet apply to surgeries and other procedures for which you don't spend the night in the hospital.*



- **Support person:** Arrange to have someone, such as a family member or a trusted friend, go with you to the surgery center. This person will need to talk with the doctor after your surgery. Many medications used to keep you comfortable during surgery will affect your memory in the hours after surgery. Your support person can make sure you don't miss any important information such as results and instructions.
- **Transportation:** Be sure someone is able to take you home after surgery. You may not be allowed to have the surgery unless you bring someone with you who can take you home. Your support person may be able to do this.
- **Documents:** You may want to complete and sign an advance directive and health care proxy before surgery. These documents are available on the Internet and from hospitals and many medical offices. If you prepare these, be sure to bring copies with you to the surgery center.
- **Personal information:** Make sure you bring your photo ID and health insurance information with you on the day of the surgery.
- **Staying safe:** Your care team will take steps to make sure your surgery is as safe as possible. For example, you might see a nurse using a surgical checklist or you may be asked more than once to verify what kind of surgery you are having and where on your body the surgery will be done. All members of your care team—including your support person or family members—should clean their hands. This can help keep you safe from surgical infections and other complications.

What To Expect After the Surgery

- **Recovery:** After your procedure, you will probably be taken to a recovery area. That's where your care team can watch to make sure you are recovering well.
- **Talking with your surgeon or nurse:** Before you leave the recovery area, you and your support person should have the opportunity to ask questions. You may want to know about how the surgery went or who to call in case of questions. You should have a clear understanding of what you need to do in the recovery period and whether you will need help from others.
- **Discharge:** You will be discharged to go home after you have recovered from the anesthesia. Your vital signs should be stable, and any pain or nausea should be under control. You will likely be required to have someone drive you home. You will receive written instructions on what to do at home. These instructions may include things like a medication schedule, things to avoid (such as certain activities or foods), possible complications to look out for, when to follow up with your doctor, and a number to call in case of problems.

What To Expect on the Day of Your Surgery

- **Admission:** When you arrive, you will check in with your photo ID and insurance information.
- **Preoperative (pre-op) area:** When it's your turn, you will move to a pre-op area. That's where a nurse will prepare you for surgery. The anesthesia provider, your doctor, and other members of your care team may talk with you during this time.

Health care team members you may see in the ambulatory surgery center could include:

Attending physician or surgeon: a medical doctor (MD) who leads the team. He or she has the final responsibility for your surgery. Other physicians, such as residents and fellows, may be involved in your care.

Physician's assistant (PA) or nurse practitioner (NP): a licensed professional who helps the physician and can perform some of the duties of a physician, including surgery and pre- and post-procedure care.

Operating room nurse or circulating nurse: a registered nurse who is in the surgery/procedure room to make sure that the procedure runs smoothly and safely.

Surgical technologists (scrub techs): personnel who set up the surgery/procedure room, prepare you for surgery, and assist the doctor by passing the instruments.

Anesthesiology team: personnel who are responsible for giving you the drugs that make you sleepy or sedated. The members of the anesthesia team vary and might include nurses, anesthesiologists, and certified registered nurse anesthetists (CRNAs).

Recovery room or post-anesthesia care unit (PACU) nurse: a nurse who monitors you immediately after surgery.