

## Preparing for My Surgery

After you and your doctor decide that surgery is the best treatment for your condition or injury, you may have a multitude of questions and concerns. Surgery is a major commitment because it affects your lifestyle for several weeks and sometimes months after surgery.

Planning for surgery can be overwhelming, but you can make it easier on yourself and on your family by being prepared and knowing what to expect.

### Basic Instructions: 0 to 7 Days Prior to My Surgery

#### Food & Drink

Please do not consume food or liquids after midnight on the evening prior to your surgery date due to complications associated with anesthesia. This includes mints and chewing gum. Additionally, we recommend that you do not smoke, chew tobacco, or consume alcohol for at least 24 hours prior to your surgery.

#### Pre-Surgery Hygiene & Dress

- You may brush your teeth the night prior to surgery but remember not to swallow liquids after midnight.
- Jewelry, watches, and body piercings should not be worn on the day of surgery.
- Do not bring valuables with you. You may wear dentures and glasses. However, it is recommended that you bring the cases to place them in during surgery. If you wear contacts, they will need to be removed, so bring your solution and a case with you.
- Please wear comfortable, loose clothing, appropriate for the procedure being performed, such as a button front blouse/shirt for shoulder surgery.
- Please bring flat sole, slip-on walking shoes.
- Please bring extra undergarments and/or diapers for young children having surgery. If they are taking a bottle, bring an empty bottle as well as a bottle with their usual formula or milk. You may also bring their favorite toy or blanket.
- If you have been provided with any medical equipment prior to your surgery date, such as slings, crutches, postoperative shoes, or walkers, please present them at check-in. You may also want to bring pillows and blankets for your trip home.

#### Medications & Testing

- Please stop taking all herbal remedies, aspirin, and anti-inflammatory medications (Advil, Aleve, Ibuprofen, Motrin, Naproxen, etc.) seven days prior to surgery unless otherwise instructed. However, it is okay to take Tylenol (acetaminophen) if something is needed for pain.
- If you are currently taking a prescription blood thinner (Coumadin, Plavix, etc.) on a regular basis for heart problems or stroke, please call your surgeon's office immediately for further instructions.
- You may take your usual morning blood pressure, heart, acid reflux, and/or seizure medications on the morning of surgery with a sip of water.

- Do not take any diabetic medicine the day of surgery. However, please make sure to bring your diabetic medication with you.
- Please provide an accurate list of daily medications when they are reviewing your health history. Continue to take all prescription medications as normal unless informed otherwise by the nursing staff. You will be instructed on which medications to take the day of the procedure.
- If you experience any health changes, such as an elevated temperature, cold, cough, or other health-related problems, please notify your doctor immediately.

### **Transportation**

As a reminder, you, the patient, will not be permitted to drive a car or leave the surgery center or hospital unattended after surgery. It is necessary to make arrangements for a responsible adult or caregiver to drive you home and stay with you for 24 hours following surgery.

### **Preparation Guide: Ambulatory Assistive Devices**

As a surgical patient, the use of a wheelchair, crutches, a walker, or other similar ambulatory devices may be necessary after your surgery. The following tips are for you to consider prior to surgery to help you adjust to your new equipment:

- Find out what type of assistive device you will be using after your surgery and visit your medical supply provider or your doctor's office to practice using this equipment.
- Work on your upper body strength. This will make crutch- and wheelchair-handling much more manageable.
- Apply for a temporary Handicap Parking permit. Address this with your doctor several weeks before your surgery—he or she will need to assist you with obtaining a permit.
- Set up a temporary bedroom for yourself if your bedroom is not on the main floor. If there are items you may need from another level of the house, be sure to collect them prior to surgery and have them at a close distance. Keep in mind that this room should be a low-traffic area of the house because you will need plenty of rest.
- Be sure to bring your ambulatory device(s) in with you on your day of surgery and present them during check-in.

### **Preparation Guide: Patient-Proof My Bathroom**

It is important to place emphasis on preparing your bathroom for postsurgical use because it is an area of the house where accidents are significantly more likely. Bathrooms are often tight spaces with several slippery surfaces and small appliances or utensils. Following these precautions can help you avoid an accident that could cause re-injury.

- Place the toiletries that you'll need within easy reach on your counter so that you don't have to strain to rummage through drawers or medicine cabinets.
- Ensure that you have an adequate supply of toiletries for your recovery period. You should set out additional rolls of toilet paper, as opposed to storing them under the sink.

- If your towels are stored in low places, such as in baskets or bottom cupboards, make sure they are within comfortable reach without the need to stoop or bend over.
- Set out a handheld mirror if you will need it to monitor your wound or for assistance in grooming.
- When it comes to showering or bathing, you should have a slip-resistant mat inside of the bathtub and a slip-resistant rug outside of the bathtub to reduce the risk of falling. You may also want to consider installing handrails to assist you when getting in and out.

## **Preparation Guide: Patient-Proof My Home**

You may not view them as such now, but after surgery, you will have a heightened sense of awareness of the numerous hazards and obstacles in your house. By making the following adjustments, your house can be a more conducive environment to your post-surgery needs.

- Fix and/or be aware of any uneven flooring in your house or uneven concrete on your driveway or patio.
- If you have steps leading up to your house, try wiggling the railing to gauge its stability, and tighten the screws if necessary. If you have outdoor steps without a railing, discuss installing one, especially if your surgery will take place during the winter months.
- Decrease your risk for falling by securing any loose cords or wires to the walls or behind furniture.
- Set your thermostat before you go in for surgery, especially if it is positioned high on the wall. This way, your house will be comfortable when you return, and you won't have to stand or reach to adjust the temperature.
- Store your groceries on low-level shelves so they are within reach without the need to strain or use a stepstool.
- Set up lamps, nightlights, or additional lighting in dimly lit areas. Avoid walking in the dark, when drowsy, or while using pain medications that cause dizziness or nausea. Keeping a flashlight nearby may also be useful in the event of a power outage.
- Be sure that all frequently used electronic devices have fresh batteries, are fully charged, and/or are firmly plugged into their outlets. The last thing you want to do after surgery is bend, twist, or crouch in awkward positions for hard-to-reach outlets.
- For safety and comfort reasons, check the batteries in your fire and carbon monoxide detectors to ensure that they are working properly and that they will last through your recovery period. You won't be able to change the batteries in fire detectors while recovering because of the danger posed by standing on chairs or stools.
- If you wear contacts or glasses, remember to always keep them close to you, and do not walk through the house without them. You may want to consider purchasing an extra pair of glasses for your convenience.
- Consider using satin sheets so that it's easier to slide in and out of bed, when necessary, without exerting too much effort.
- Buy, rent, or borrow books, magazines, and movies to help you pass the time as your body rests. Use remotes as necessary and keep these items in a place that is easy to reach.
- Shop for a pillowed lap desk so that you can comfortably use your laptop while lying down.
- Purchase a reaching tool that can help you pick up things that have fallen on the floor.

- If you know that you will be spending a lot of time on your couch, reposition your ottoman to your comfort. You should certainly not be moving furniture or heavy items post-surgery.

## **Preparation Guide: Personal Assistance**

After surgery, you may require assistance from—or total dependence upon—another person when performing a multitude of daily tasks. From dressing and showering to childcare and running errands, be prepared to ask for help from people whom you and your family are comfortable with. The following is for informational purposes only and should be used at your discretion.

- Identify a family member or close friend who will be able to monitor and assist you throughout your recovery period, particularly for the week following surgery. It is especially necessary for that person to stay with you for the first 24 hours after surgery so that he or she can help you get settled and maneuver around the house.
- If neighbors and friends offer to make food for you, accept! These people care about you and are looking for some way to help. Plus, you will probably get tired of eating redundant microwave dinners.
- If you have children, be very watchful of toys, games, controllers, or any other out-of-place items. You should ask your babysitter or a close friend or relative to stay with you to assist with childcare.
- Inform your mailman that you will be having surgery. He or she might be willing to drop off the mail at your door.
- If necessary, ask your spouse, a close friend, or a relative to help you as you shower or bathe. If you don't require assistance while you shower, simply have him or her help while you enter and exit the shower or bathtub to prevent any slips or falls that could cause re-injury.

## **Preparation Guide: Personal Preparation**

Listed below are some reminders and suggestions for things to accomplish prior to surgery so that your recovery period is as leisurely and stress-free as possible. Taking care of some of your responsibilities beforehand can allow you to focus on your recovery, not your workload.

- If possible, pay your monthly bills beforehand. Then you won't have to worry about making unnecessary trips out to the mailbox!
- It is sometimes necessary for you to give written or verbal consent for someone to pick up prescriptions on your behalf. Ask about your pharmacy's policy prior to surgery to see if you will need to make additional arrangements.
- Write out a list of phone numbers, including your doctor's office and pharmacy, for your reference and for anyone who may be assisting you throughout the duration of your recovery.
- Write down the office hours of your pharmacy and doctor's office to ensure that you will never have to go without your necessary medications.
- Consider using a pillbox to help you keep track of dosages and to make sure that you're taking the right medications at the right intervals. It might also be helpful to create and update a medication chart.
- Make sure that all errands or household chores, such as washing dishes or doing laundry, are completed before your surgery. Strenuous activity is strongly discouraged, and you will need an abundance of clean clothing and dishes for your recovery period.

- Begin devising a grocery list the week before your surgery and go to the store within a couple of days before your surgery so that your groceries are still fresh when you return home.
- On your grocery list, you should include milk and/or vitamin D, which promotes bone health. When buying milk, stick to the smaller containers that are easier to lift.
- It is highly recommended that you stock up on pre-made microwave meals or that you cook meals and freeze them for use after surgery. Microwavable meals are quick and allow you to avoid any movements that may put additional stress on your body, like hovering and bustling around the kitchen.
- Consider buying a reusable spill-proof drinking glasses with a straw. They are perfect for staying hydrated while resting in bed and lying down.
- Use paper plates and plastic silverware temporarily if nobody is available to help you wash your dishes.
- Make yourself comfortable! Set out loose-fitting clothing on your dresser or bed so that you can easily change without straining.
- Avoid wearing socks or slippers without tread on the bottom—they generally don't provide adequate traction and can be easy to slip or trip in.

### **Preparation Guide: Travel Safety**

It is often recommended that surgery patients refrain from traveling during recovery. However, travel is often unavoidable, so we advise you to keep your travel and outdoor exercise to a minimum and avoid long distances. If you must travel, keep in mind the following tips:

- Stop for some light stretching at random intervals during trips that last more than an hour or two.
- If you are susceptible to motion sickness, especially while taking certain medications, you should pack water and a snack.
- Consider environmental and weather-related issues. For instance, make sure that you travel on well-maintained roads, especially if your surgery is scheduled during the winter months.
- Avoid hazardous driving conditions, such as driving in the fog, at night, or during rush hour.
- Do not walk outside without assistance and avoid walking in rainy or snowy conditions.
- Stay clear of wet grass, slippery sidewalks, and rough or uneven surfaces, such as gravel, brick, or cobblestone roads.