

## Preparing for My Surgery

Once you and your doctor determine that surgery is the right option for your condition or injury, it's natural to have many questions and concerns. Undergoing surgery is a significant commitment, as it can impact your daily routine for several weeks or even months during recovery.

Although preparing for surgery may feel overwhelming, you can ease the process for yourself and your loved ones by planning and understanding what to expect.

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

#### Food & Drink

You should not eat or drink anything after midnight on the night before your surgery, as doing so can cause complications with anesthesia. This restriction also applies to mints and chewing gum. In addition, please avoid smoking, chewing tobacco, or drinking alcohol for at least 24 hours prior to your surgery.

#### Pre-Surgery Hygiene & Dress

- You may brush your teeth the night before surgery, but remember not to swallow liquids after midnight.
- Jewelry, watches, and body piercings should not be worn on the day of surgery.
- Please avoid bringing valuables with you on the day of surgery. You may wear dentures and glasses, but be sure to bring their cases so they can be safely stored during your procedure. If you wear contact lenses, they must be removed beforehand, so remember to bring your lens solution and a case.
- 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 before 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.) regularly 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 review 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 on 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**

You will not be permitted to drive a car or leave the surgery center or hospital unattended after surgery. You must arrange for a responsible adult or caregiver to drive you home and stay with you for 24 hours following surgery.

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

The use of a wheelchair, crutches, a walker, or other similar ambulatory devices may be necessary after your surgery. Consider the following tips before 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, 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) with you on the day of surgery and present them during check-in.

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

Preparing your bathroom for use after surgery is especially important, as it's one of the areas in the home where accidents are more likely to occur. Bathrooms tend to be small spaces with slippery surfaces and various items that can pose risks. Taking the recommended precautions will help reduce the chance of an accident and protect you from potential 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 you store towels in low areas, such as baskets or bottom cupboards, ensure they are positioned so you can reach them comfortably without stooping or bending.
- Set out a handheld mirror if you will need it to monitor your wound or for assistance in grooming.
- For showering or bathing, use a slip-resistant mat inside the bathtub and a non-slip rug outside to help prevent falls. You might also consider installing handrails for added support when getting in and out.

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

Although you may not notice them now, after surgery, you'll likely become more aware of the many hazards and obstacles in your home. By making a few adjustments in advance, you can create a safer, more comfortable environment that better supports your recovery needs.

- Fix and/or be aware of any uneven flooring in your house or uneven concrete on your driveway or patio.
- Check any steps leading up to your house for stability. Tighten any loose boards, if necessary. If you have outdoor steps without a railing, consider installing one, especially if your surgery takes place during the winter months.
- Remove any loose cords or wires in walking paths or relocate them 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 lower shelves so they are easy to reach without stretching or using 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 your safety and peace of mind, make sure the batteries in your fire and carbon monoxide detectors are working and will last throughout your recovery.
- If you wear contacts or glasses, remember to always keep them close to you, and do not walk through the house without them. 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 to 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 find that many everyday tasks require extra help—or even full assistance. Whether it's getting dressed, bathing, caring for children, or handling errands, it's wise to plan ahead and lean on trusted family members or friends for support. The tips below are meant to guide you and should be followed at your own discretion.

- Arrange for a family member or close friend to assist you during recovery, especially in the first week. Ideally, someone should stay with you for the first 24 hours after surgery to help you settle in and move safely around your home.
- Accept offers of help, such as meals from friends or neighbors. They care about you and want to support you—and it's a great way to avoid eating repetitive microwave dinners.
- If you have children, keep floors clear of toys, games, and other items that could cause tripping. Ask a babysitter, friend, or relative to help with childcare during your recovery.
- Notify your mail carrier about your surgery. They may be willing to deliver mail directly to your door.
- If needed, ask your spouse, a friend, or a relative to assist you while bathing. Even if you can shower independently, have someone help you enter and exit the tub or shower to prevent slips and falls.

## **Preparation Guide: Personal Preparation**

Below are reminders and tips to help you prepare before surgery, ensuring your recovery is as smooth and stress-free as possible. Handling certain tasks in advance allows you to focus on healing rather than worrying about your workload.

- If possible, pay your monthly bills beforehand. Then you won't have to worry about making unnecessary trips out to the mailbox!
- You may need to provide written or verbal consent for someone else to pick up your prescriptions. Check your pharmacy's policy before surgery to determine if any additional arrangements are required.
- Create a list of important phone numbers—such as your doctor's office and pharmacy—for easy reference and to share with anyone assisting you during 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.
- Use a pillbox to organize medications and ensure you take the correct doses at the right times. Keeping an updated medication chart can also help track your schedule.
- 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.
- Shop a few days before your surgery so the food stays fresh when you return home. Include items like milk and/or vitamin D to support bone health, and choose smaller milk containers for easier lifting.
- 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 using a spill-proof water bottle with a straw. They are perfect for staying hydrated during recovery.
- 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**

Patients are generally advised to avoid traveling during recovery. If travel is unavoidable, limit trips and outdoor activities, and steer clear of long distances. If you must travel, keep these tips in mind:

- Take breaks for light stretching during trips lasting more than one or two hours.
- If you experience motion sickness—especially while on certain medications—bring water and a snack.
- Plan for environmental and weather conditions. For example, ensure roads are well-maintained, particularly during winter months.
- Avoid hazardous driving situations such as fog, nighttime travel, and rush-hour traffic.
- Do not walk outdoors without assistance and avoid rainy or snowy conditions.
- Stay away from wet grass, slippery sidewalks, and uneven surfaces like gravel, brick, or cobblestone.