

Preparing for surgery | Fitter Better Sooner

Your role

Having surgery is a big moment in your life and it's normal to feel anxious about it. Fitter patients who are able to improve their health and activity levels recover from surgery more quickly.

What you do now can have a really big impact on your recovery Taking an active role in planning and preparing for your surgery will help you feel in control, leave hospital sooner and get back to normal more quickly. This leaflet will give you general advice on what you can do to get the best outcome from your surgery.

The healthcare team Healthcare professionals from different medical specialties will work with you to make your surgery and recovery go smoothly. They will look after you before, during and after your surgery. This is often referred to as the perioperative team.

But it all starts with you

Preparing your body

Lifestyle - there are many changes you can make to reduce the risks of surgery. Even small changes can make a big difference.

Exercise - your heart and lungs have to work harder after an operation to help the body to heal. If you are already active, they will be used to this. While you are waiting for your operation, try and increase your activity levels. Brisk walking, swimming, cycling, gardening or playing with children are all helpful. Try to do any activity which makes you feel out of breath at least three times per week, but always check with your doctor first what type of exercise is most appropriate for you. Activities that improve your strength and balance will also be useful for your recovery.

Weight - if you are overweight, losing weight can help reduce the stress on your heart and lungs. In addition it can help to:

- lower your blood pressure
- improve your blood sugar level
- reduce pain in your joints
- reduce your risk of blood clots after surgery
- reduce your risk of wound infection after surgery
- allow you to exercise more easily

Alcohol - Alcohol can have many effects on the body, but importantly it can reduce the liver's ability to produce the building blocks necessary for healing. Make sure you are drinking within the recommended limits, or lower, to improve your body's ability to heal after surgery.

Smoking - Stopping smoking is hard, but the good news is that quitting or cutting down before surgery can reduce length of stay in hospital, improve wound healing and lung function. Support available – call **Quitline 13 7848**

Medical conditions - Many medical conditions can affect recovery from surgery. It is important to make sure any known conditions are controlled as well as possible ahead of your surgery. You can also book in for a general health check with your GP.

Diabetes - Good control of your blood sugar is really important to reduce your risk of infection after surgery. Think about your diet and weight. Talk to your diabetes nurse or GP early to see if there is need to make changes to your treatment.

Blood pressure - Blood pressure should be controlled to safe levels to reduce your risk of stroke. Sometimes operations may be delayed if it is too high. Have your blood pressure checked at your GP clinic well ahead of your operation. If it is high, your GP can check your medications and make any changes needed ahead of the operation.

Anaemia (low blood count) - If you have been bleeding or have a chronic medical condition, a blood test can check whether you are anaemic. If you are, you should talk to your GP about treatment to improve your blood count before surgery. Treating your anaemia before surgery reduces the chance of your procedure being cancelled or needing a blood transfusion. It will also help your recovery and make you feel less tired after your surgery.

Heart, lung and other medical problems - If you have any other long-term medical problems, consider asking your GP if you need any tests such as an echocardiogram or for a review of your medications, especially if you think your health is not as good as it could be.

Anxiety and mental health - Most people feel some anxiety about having surgery. If the thought of going into hospital is making you very anxious or upset, it may be helpful to talk about your concerns with your GP. If you are taking medication for mental health problems, it is important to let the nurse at the hospital know about your medication. They will usually want you to continue this.

Dental health - If you have loose teeth or crowns, a visit to the dentist may reduce the risk of damage to your teeth during an operation. It is important to make sure any known conditions are controlled as well as possible ahead of your surgery. Poor dental health is associated with heart disease.

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