

Preparing for Surgery

Family Member/Caregiver Support

A family member, close friend or caregiver whom you designate will become an important member of your extended team to help you prior to surgery and throughout your recovery. Please review this book with your family members/caregivers prior to surgery. Also, remember to introduce these individuals to your doctor.

Please invite your family member/caregiver to attend a physical therapy (PT) and occupational therapy (OT) session after your surgery so the therapists can explain how the family member may need to help you at home. These family members/caregivers may also help with:

- Transportation to and from the hospital
- Providing support around the home during the first week after discharge
- Meal planning

Medications

Some medications you currently take may prove harmful during surgery because they thin your blood and increase the risk of bleeding after surgery. If you take medications that contain aspirin, anti-inflammatories (such as ibuprofen, Motrin, Advil, Aleve, etc.), blood thinners (such as Warfarin) or arthritis medications, ask your surgeon when it is best for you to stop taking these medications. Also be sure to let your surgeon know if you are taking any vitamins or herbal supplements. During your visit with your primary care physician for your history and physical, your medication will be reviewed again. You will be instructed on which medications or supplements you must stop taking before surgery.

Staying Active Prior to Surgery

Continue normal activities for as long as you are able up until your surgery date, but do not begin any new exercise or activities. Your doctor or therapist may recommend pre-operative exercises tailored to your individual needs to improve your strength and range of motion.

Write down any questions you may have for your doctor or nurse:

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Pre-Operative Nutrition

- **Drink enough fluids prior to surgery.**

Your body should be well-hydrated prior to surgery. Your physician may adjust these guidelines if you have any other medical conditions, so please discuss them prior to your surgery.

- **Make sure your protein intake is adequate EVERY day.**

Protein helps your body heal. It can be found in meat, fish, poultry, eggs, dairy products and legumes. You should have no fewer than 2 servings a day.

- **Increase your fiber intake.**

Since you will be receiving medications that can contribute to some constipation after surgery, it is recommended that you increase your fiber. "Bulk up" your diet with a variety of food like raw fruits and vegetables, whole-grain breads or muffins, cereals, nuts and beans.

- **Make sure you are getting sufficient iron if you will be donating your own blood.**

Take iron as directed by your doctor. Vitamin C helps with iron absorption. Do not take iron with milk. Dietary iron is in lean red meat, dark green leafy vegetables, egg yolks, raisins and prunes.

- **Make sure you are getting adequate calcium.**

Calcium is necessary to maintain the strength of your bones. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends 1,500 mg daily. Try to take some of your daily calcium as servings of milk, yogurt or cheese. Do not exceed 500 to 600 mg of calcium at any one time; spread out your calcium intake throughout the day.

- **REMEMBER: You need vitamin D to absorb calcium.**

You need 1,000 IU daily. Vitamin D is frequently in multiple vitamins, milk products, fortified cereals and calcium supplements.

- **Try to stop smoking.**

- **Decrease your alcohol intake.**

It is recommended that you drink no more than one alcoholic drink per day and none at all for 48 hours prior to surgery.

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Home Safety Preparation

Setting up your home prior to surgery is an essential step to ensure a safe environment after discharge from the hospital. Listed below are points to consider BEFORE SURGERY while setting up your home.

Stairs

- Be prepared to talk to your therapist about your stairs and railings (e.g., Do you have railings on both sides or just one side?).
- Do you have stairs to get into/out of your home?
 - Having a family member/caregiver present to assist you into/out of your home is highly recommended.

Bathroom

- Be prepared to talk to your Occupational Therapist about your bathroom set up (e.g., Do you have a shower stall or a tub?). Your therapist will make equipment recommendations based on your specific environment to ensure safety at home.
 - If you have a tub, it may be recommended that you get a tub transfer chair to ensure safety while bathing.
 - If you have a stand-up shower, it may be recommended that you get a shower chair to ensure safety while bathing.
- Do you have grab bars in the shower?
 - Grab bars are a helpful way to increase your safety in the tub or shower.
- How high is your toilet seat?
 - For standard toilet seat heights, it is recommended that you get an elevated commode seat to ensure safety with transfers to/from the toilet.

Bedroom/Living Room

- Is your home arranged for ease of movement once you return home?
 - It is recommended that you remove throw rugs and other obstacles from the floor to ensure safety while walking.
- Are items in cabinets and dresser drawers easily accessible?
 - You should not be on step stools or ladders after discharge, so be sure to move items as necessary so you can reach them easily (not too high and not too low).
- How high is your bed?
 - Be sure to let your therapist know the approximate height of your bed so he or she can help you practice bed mobility with a bed height more realistic to your home setup.

Children/Pets

- Do you have small children or pets?
 - Small children may need some education on how to interact with you in a way that ensures their safety and yours.
 - Take steps to ensure that your pet does not try to jump on you or bump you while walking.