



# SHARED DECISION MAKING

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ARE YOU HAVING SURGERY?

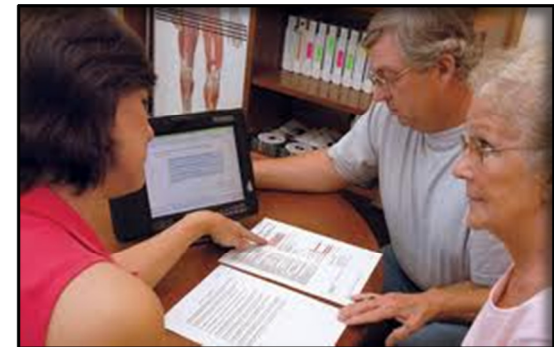




Most surgeries are elective, which means you should take this time to learn more about the surgery your doctor has advised for you.

It is your choice to have time to make a shared decision between you and your doctor and to determine if the surgery is the right treatment for you.

Learning as much as you can before surgery will help you prepare and help with your healing process so use your time with your doctor wisely.



Educate yourself, talk openly, and consult with your doctor. Ask questions.

## **THE FOLLOWING ARE SOME QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD ASK YOURSELF:**

### **WHY IS MY DOCTOR REFERRING ME TO HAVE THIS SURGERY?**

There are many reasons to have surgery. Some surgeries are performed to fix a problem; some are done to improve symptoms like pain, and sometimes surgeries are done to find the cause of a problem. Keep in mind that your doctors and surgeons may be influenced towards treating your disease centered on what is evidence-based medicine but as the patient, you must be informed and understand the potential outcomes from the surgery. Take this time to know your disease and your first step is to know why exactly you are having surgery.

### **DO I KNOW WHAT THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND SIDE EFFECTS OF THE SURGERY ARE?**

There is NO operation that is risk free. If nobody has discussed complications with you about the operation, take the time and do your homework, go online and look-up the surgery, discuss with family or friends and write down questions to ask your doctor. Complications that occur during surgery and after recovery are unplanned but in the United States they happen every day and every minute. You need to know what those risks are so you can weigh the risks and benefits of surgery.

Some of the common complications to surgery are bleeding, infection, blood clots, and reactions to anesthesia. All surgeries, whether elective or absolutely necessary, carry a risk of death. Your surgeon or doctor should tell you about other common complications to the particular surgery you are scheduled to have or planning on having.

Also consider you may have a higher risk of complications based on your chronic medical conditions such as diabetes or coronary artery disease.

Some common side effects to surgery may be nausea, postoperative pain, delayed healing and swelling.

## **IF I CHOOSE NOT TO HAVE SURGERY, ARE THERE ANY ALTERNATIVE CHOICES?**

There may be alternatives to having the surgery. The alternative may be a better option for you if your risks are high for complications. And sometimes surgery is just an option; surgery doesn't always mean it's the best option. You should consult with your doctor. The choice to have or not to have surgery may be an obvious choice for your doctor because they are treating a disease but there are quality of life issues, personal beliefs, and emotional reasons that are important to you that may make the alternative the right choice.

## **WHAT IS MY RECOVERY PERIOD?**

Ask your doctor and surgeon what the typical recovery time is for your surgery. What should you expect the first few days, weeks, and months after surgery? How long do they expect for you to fully recover from surgery? Will you have to stay overnight after the surgery or will you be going home the same day after surgery? If hospitalization will be necessary how many days will you have to stay in the hospital? Will you need another alternative level of care after surgery and what are their expectations? Will you need help at home? Recovery period can often be overlooked. Knowing your expected recovery period will help with your healing process. Your friends and family may also need to know in case you will need their help after surgery.

## **WILL MY GOAL(S) BE MET BY HAVING THIS SURGERY?**

Expectations between you and your doctor may be different. It's important to have an open discussion with your doctor. For example, your goal for a knee replacement surgery might be to be able to walk again but your doctor's goal for the surgery for you might be to give you only relief from the knee pain. Too often patients are unhappy because both parties assumed they had the same expectations and goals in mind.

## **DID MY DOCTOR TALK TO ME ABOUT GENERAL ANESTHESIA?**

Ask your doctor and your anesthesiologist what are the risks and benefits of general anesthesia. Ask them if there is an alternative to general anesthesia. Sometimes the risk of anesthesia is greater than the surgery itself. You should discuss any prior surgeries, reactions to anesthetics, allergies, and home medications with your doctors.

## **AM I COMFORTABLE WITH THE TIME AND INFORMATION I HAVE TO MAKE DECISION REGARDING SURGERY?**

You should be. There is no decision bigger than the decisions regarding your health. Your decision should be an informed decision that you make with your doctor's guidance. Whether your surgery is elective or absolutely necessary you should have and take the time to 1) learn about your disease, 2) learn about treatment options, and 3) understand what the outcomes are to those treatments.

You should be making a shared decision with the help of your doctor that you are comfortable with. You can always ask for a second opinion if you are still not comfortable after you've met with your surgeon and doctor.

## **AM I COMFORTABLE WITH THE DECISION I'VE MADE?**

You may never be absolutely comfortable with the decision you made. But the more you know and the more you are informed the more you will become comfortable with your decision



## Shared Decision Making “Check-List”

**Dear Member, please check the appropriate response “Yes or No” and bring this form with you to your pre-operative evaluation. Thank you.**

1. Do you understand the reason why your doctor is referring you for surgery? Yes  No
2. Did the doctor provide you information about the possible risks and side effects of the surgery? Yes  No
3. Did your doctor share with you any alternatives that do not require surgery? Yes  No
4. Did your doctor explain the recovery period? Yes  No
5. Did you and your doctor discuss if your health goals will be met by having the surgery? Yes  No
6. Did your doctor discuss the role of general anesthesia? Yes  No
7. Do you feel you’ve had enough time and information to make your decision? Yes  No
8. Overall, are you comfortable with the decision you made? Yes  No