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## **SURGERY CHECKLIST**

### **Choosing the Surgeon**

- Check that the surgeon is board certified by the American Board of Surgery. Board certification indicates that a surgeon successfully completed an accredited surgical residency and passed rigorous written and oral examinations.
- Check with state medical boards regarding a surgeon's licensure, training, and history of disciplinary action.
- Check how long the surgeon has been in practice (since completing fellowship, or since completing residency if the surgeon did not do a fellowship). Evidence suggests that surgeons who have been practicing for about five to ten years provide the best care because they have had several years of operative experience as the primary surgeon but have also trained recently enough to know and use the latest techniques.
- Ask the surgeon about his or her experience with the operation you need (e.g. the number of times annually he or she performs the specific operation needed). The surgeon should do the operation at least 25 times per year – the more times, the lower the risk of complications, in general. Realize that in rural areas it will be harder to find surgeons with high volumes of the desired procedure, and weigh this risk against the inconvenience of traveling.
- Assess the surgeon's bedside manner, and decide whether you can establish a good and trusting doctor-patient relationship.
- Ask the surgeon if he or she uses the [World Health Organization \(WHO\) Surgical Safety Checklist](#) or if there is already a surgical safety checklist used at the hospital or surgical center where the surgeon operates.

### **Before the Surgery**

- Arrange for a health care navigator (ideally), or a family member or friend, to be with you on the day of the surgery and to be available to help during the post-operative recovery period.
- Clearly designate one individual as the surrogate decision maker, and preferably establish one person as the health care power of attorney or health care proxy.
- Determine your preferences for life-sustaining treatment and other interventions in case of complications during or following the surgery, and then review them with your health care power of attorney or health care proxy.
- Report changes in your health (even minor ones such as a cold or cough) to your surgeon.
- Ask your surgeon whether and how you should stop taking any of your medications before the surgery.
- Do not eat or drink anything for eight hours prior to surgery.
- Refrain from smoking after midnight on the day of your surgery.

### **On the Day of the Surgery**

- Shower with chlorhexadine gluconate (CHG), a special antiseptic soap that you should receive from hospital personnel prior to surgery. Make sure that you request this soap if nobody offers it to you. Using this soap will help to reduce the number of germs on your skin, which will reduce the risk of acquiring an infection during surgery. Follow the instructions below for proper use of this soap:
  - Wash and rinse your hair first using your normal shampoo.
  - Make sure you completely rinse the shampoo from your hair and body.
  - Wet your entire body.



- Turn the water off in the shower or move away from the water spray to avoid rinsing the antiseptic soap solution off.
  - Apply the antiseptic CHG soap solution to your body starting at the neck and lather your entire body from the neck down.
  - Never use the antiseptic solution near your eyes, ears or mouth.
  - Gently wash your body.
  - Scrub the areas where the incision(s) will be located for about 3 minutes.
  - Avoid scrubbing your skin too hard.
  - Once you have completed the scrub, rinse the CHG soap off your body completely using shower water.
  - Do not wash with regular soap after you have used the antiseptic CHG soap solution.
  - Do not shave any areas where surgery will be performed (chest, legs)—you may shave several days before your surgery, however.
  - Pat yourself dry with a clean, freshly washed towel.
  - DO NOT apply any powders, deodorants or lotions.
  - Dress with clean, freshly washed clothes.
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- Remove any nail polish and contact lenses. If you must wear contacts, bring your storage case so that you may remove them prior to surgery.
  - Leave all jewelry, cash, and valuables at home.
  - Tell the anesthesiologist if you currently have, or ever have had, any of the following:
    - bleeding disorders
    - allergies or adverse drug reactions
    - heart or lung conditions
    - obstructive sleep apnea
    - diabetes

All of the above can affect your risk for surgical or anesthetic complications.

- Mention if you have had problems with anesthesia in the past.
- Inform the anesthesiologist of all medications you take and when you last took each one (bring a written list of this information with you).
- Make sure that the patient identification bracelet is accurate and contains your full name and date of birth.
- Make sure that the surgeon marks the operative site in the preoperative holding area if it is a sided-surgery (e.g. a right versus left knee replacement).

#### **In the operating room**

- Remind the anesthesiologist to administer the prophylactic antibiotic on time.
- Remind the operating room staff of your name, the surgical procedure, and the surgical site.