Preparing for Cancer Surgery

What to know and do before your operation

This is a simple patient guide. Every operation is different.
Advice from your surgeon and anaesthesia team matters most.

Cancer surgery is not always the first treatment. Some patients need chemotherapy or radiotherapy before surgery. Ask your doctor what is recommended for your cancer and why.

1. Understand the plan

- What operation is planned and what is its goal?
- Which body part or orgams may be affected?
- Could reconstruction or a stoma be needed?
- What are the likely benefits, risks and alternatives?
- How long might I stay in hospital?



2. Share your health details

- Tell the team about diabetes, BP, heart, lung, kidney, thyroid disease, allergies and other illnesses.
- Mention any previous operation or problems with anaesthesia.
- Tell them about fever, cough, infection, breathing trouble, or dental and mouth problems.
- Keep a list of all medicines, supplements and herbal products.



3. Build your body for surgery

- Eat nourishing, protein-rich food.
- Walk or stay active within your ability.
- Stop smoking, tobacco, supari and alcohol.
- Tell your doctor if you have weight loss, anaemia, diabetes or nutrition problems.



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Before admission and on the day of surgery

Simple step-by-step preparation

Good preparation can make the day of surgery safer and less stressful

4. Before admission

- Complete the blood tests, heart tests, scans and anaesthesia review advised by your team.
- Understand fasting instructions — when to stop food, water or other drinks.
- Do bowel preparation or skin preparation only if your doctor has advised it.
- Arrange a responsible family member or friend to help during admission and for the first few days at home.
- Pack your ID, reports, medicine list, comfortable clothes, glasses or hearing aid, and personal essentials. Leave valuables at home.



5. On the day of surgery

- Follow the surgeon and anaesthesia team's advice exactly about fasting and medicines.
- Tell the hospital immediately if you have fever, cough, breathing trouble, a new illness, or any sudden change.
- Your name, operation and body part may be checked several times — this is normal and improves safety.
- Ask where you are likely to go after surgery: recovery room, ward or ICU.



6. What is common after surgery?

- You may temporarily have an IV line, dressing, drains, feeding tube or urinary catheter depending on the operation.
- Pain and nausea can usually be treated — tell the staff if you are uncomfortable.
- You may be advised early walking, breathing exercises, nutrition support and physiotherapy.
- Before discharge, understand wound care, medicines, food, activity limits, follow-up and when reports will be available.



Contact your team urgently if:

- Fever
- Increasing redness / swelling / discharge from the wound
- Very severe pain
- Repeated vomiting
- Breathing trouble
- Heavy bleeding
- Fainting or sudden severe weakness

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Questions to ask before surgery

Carry this page with you

1. Ask your surgeon these 7 questions

1 ☐ Why is this surgery needed now?



2 ☐ What exactly will be done in my operation?



3 ☐ What are the main risks or complications?



4 ☐ How long may I need to stay in hospital?



5 ☐ Will it affect eating, speaking, walking, passing urine or stool, or daily life?



6 ☐ When will my final report be ready, and might I need more treatment afterward?



7 ☐ What warning signs after going home should make me contact the team urgently?



2. My preparation checklist

- ☐ Reports and scans ready
- ☐ Medicine and allergy list ready
- ☐ Anaesthesia assessment completed
- ☐ Fasting and medicine instructions understood
- ☐ Help at home arranged for after discharge
- ☐ My questions are written down



3. A small reminder for patients and families

You do not need to remember everything alone. Bring a trusted family member or friend, write down notes, and ask the team to explain again if something is unclear. Being prepared reduces anxiety.



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