

Be Informed: Questions to Ask Your Doctor Before You Have Surgery

From the Agency for Health Care Policy and Research

All surgeries and treatments have risks and benefits. The following are 12 questions to ask your primary care doctor and surgeon before you have surgery. Your doctors should welcome questions. Patients who are well informed about their treatment tend to be more satisfied with the outcome or results of their treatment.

- **What operation are you recommending?** Ask your doctors to explain the procedure. Often, a diagram or picture may help you understand what will be done.
- **Why do I need the procedure?** Make sure you understand how the proposed operation or procedure fits in with the diagnosis of your medical condition.
- **Are there alternatives to surgery?**
- **What are the benefits of having the operation or procedure?** Ask how long the benefits are likely to last. When finding out about the benefits of the operation, be realistic.
- **What are the risks of having the operation or procedure?** All operations and procedures carry some risk.
- **What if I don't have this operation or procedure?**
- **Where can I get a second opinion?** Make sure to get your records from the first doctor so that the second one does not have to repeat tests.
- **What has been your experience in doing the operation?** One way to reduce the risks of surgery is to choose a surgeon who has been thoroughly trained to do the procedure and has plenty of experience doing it.
- **Where will the operation or procedure be done?**
- **What kind of anesthesia will I need?**
- **How long will it take me to recover?**

- **How much will the operation cost?** Health insurance coverage for surgery can vary, and there may be some costs you will have to pay.

Reference:

US Department of Health and Human Services

Public Health Service

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