

Hope & Healing

Surgery When Surgery is Called For

A heart at peace gives life to the body — Proverbs 14:30

Introduction _____

Deciding whether or not to have an operation is difficult. We are talking here about non-emergency surgery when you have some time to think the matter over and see what your options are.

Step 1. Verifying the Surgeon's Qualifications.

When choosing a surgeon, find out if the surgeon has been certified by a surgical board. The American Board of Orthopedic Surgery, for example, certifies orthopedists who have passed their certifying exam. Surgeons who are board certified have had a number of years of training in dealing with diseases of their special area and have passed exams to qualify them. The surgeon's office can give you this information.

Also look for the letters F.A.C.S. after the surgeon's name. This means that the surgeon has passed an evaluation of his or her surgical training and skills and that the surgeon is known for doing what's right, as well. The letters F.A.C.S. indicate that the surgeon is a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons.

If the operation is a rare or complex one, you will want a surgeon who is operating several times a week regularly and who has done this particular operation a number of times.

Step 2. Ask the Surgeon:

- What is the problem?
- What operation is planned?
- Can I live if I don't have the operation? What kind of life can I expect if I decide against surgery?
- Are there other treatments that could

be tried before surgery?

- What are the risks of surgery?
- How long will I be in the hospital?
- How long is the recovery period and what is involved?
- How much will the operation cost? Will my insurance cover all the costs, including special tests?
- How common is this type surgery? How much experience have you had with this kind of operation?
- What percentage of the operations were successful?
- Who will administer the anesthesia?

Getting A Second Opinion _____

Many people are uneasy about asking their doctor to arrange for a second opinion. Today it is common medical practice and most do it or encourage it.

A second opinion can be requested of a medical specialist, as well as from another surgeon. When requesting an opinion of a medical specialist you are searching for a way to avoid surgery and treat the problem medically. When you are asking another surgeon for his or her advice you are more or less asking the same questions that you asked the first surgeon.

Finding a Doctor For a Second Opinion _____

Be sure you arrange to have a copy of your records forwarded to the second doctor. Be certain to check with the second doctor's office before the time of your appointment to ask if they have arrived. There is no need to have the second doctor repeat expensive tests.

If the second doctor agrees that surgery is your only reasonable choice, you will be referred back to the first surgeon for the operation. If the second doctor disagrees with the first, you may feel you have enough information to decide what to do. You may wish to talk with the first surgeon again, or you may wish to see a third doctor. Your personal physician's advice will help you decide what to do.

Why You Need a Second Opinion

Studies estimate that about 25% of the surgical procedures performed in the U.S. each year are of limited benefit or are entirely useless. For the procedures below you especially need to talk with your doctor about getting a second opinion:

- Knee surgery.
- Breast surgery.
- Carotid Artery surgery.
- Hysterectomy.
- Back surgery.
- Tonsillectomy.
- Foot surgery.

Predonating Your Own Blood _____

Having your own blood taken and stored in advance of nonemergency surgery eliminates practically all risks associated with blood transfusions.

Your blood can also be stored in liquid form for as long as 6 weeks and for longer periods if it is frozen. You can donate a pint of blood about twice a month if you are free of major heart or lung problems and your doctor agrees that it is all right for you to have the blood taken. Now, let's turn to the topic of surgery in children.

Preparing Children for Surgery _____

When a child needs an operation the better you prepare ahead of time the better will be the outcome overall. These steps will help:

Step 1. Find out exactly what is going to happen; then be open and honest with your child. The more you know about your child's operation or treatment, the clearer you can be when you describe the process to the child.

Step 2. Be honest about the pain and discomfort that the child will experience. Tell the child whether you can be in the recovery room and whether there will be an intravenous tube attached to his or her arm. Also tell your child how long it will be before he or she will be able to get out of bed and be able to eat regular food.

Step 3. Deal with your child's fears. Accepting the fact that your child will be afraid of being separated from family and friends, afraid of being operated on, and afraid of the pain. Acknowledge the fears and reassure your child that all will be well as you work your way through each stage of the process.

Step 4. If possible, visit the hospital in advance with your child. Many hospitals have pre-admission programs in which a staff member gives children a tour and explains the use of some of the equipment. Encourage your child to play

hospital games: getting tests done, being operated on, bandaging dolls or stuffed toys. Such activities help produce a sense of mastery over a frightening experience.

Also, listen carefully to what your child says to others about the upcoming operation. Such knowledge can help you deal with specific fears and with misconceptions that your child has about the hospital and the procedure itself.

Anesthesia _____

Two types of anesthesia are used during surgery. A local anesthetic numbs a body part; a general anesthetic puts you to sleep. The thought of being put to sleep makes some patients nervous. Sometimes a sedative is used before surgery to make you calm.

Keeping you alive and well during surgery requires lots of equipment and either an anesthesiologist or a nurse anesthetist to see that everything is working as it should. Calamities during surgery that can cause you harm are estimated by experts to occur about once every 200,000 operations and it is much lower for non-emergency surgery than it is for emergency surgery.

Summary _____

It's almost always good advice to question whether you need an operation. Your personal doctor can give you guidance in seeking a second opinion if one is needed. We've reviewed many of the right questions you need to ask. Once you have answers to these questions you'll be better prepared to decide whether surgery or another treatment is best.

Awaken the Miracles Within You

The Miracle of a Way of Life

When we believe something strongly, the belief becomes our way of life, all day long.

A doctor can point out habits that will eventually cause poor health. But your doctor can't stay your hand when you reach for the sausage biscuit. Nor can he or she go to the gym for you and work out. You have to do the thinking about what's wrong. You and only you can cancel the bad habits and substitute something better.

- First, think.
- Second, become convinced.
- Third, write it down.
- Fourth, do it.

Today we know a lot about health and the habits that ruin it. You must believe that you can have a strong healthy body. That's the mind-body connection. Now, train the soul along with the body for the most wonderful results. You will see, when you do your own thinking, that a healthy way of life pays big dividends.

The recommendations and information in this handout are appropriate in most cases. However, for specific information concerning your personal medical condition, please, consult your doctor.