

# When Your Doctor Recommends a Specific Treatment, Procedure, or Surgery

*Learn about your condition, ask questions, and remember that you have the right to say “no” to any treatment you don’t fully understand.*

The single most important way you can stay healthy is to be an active member of your own health care team. One way to get high-quality health care is to find and use information and take an active role in all of the decisions made about your care. Understanding the importance your role plays in your treatment will help you get the most benefit from your care. It is important to take an active role in your healthcare by working with your doctor, nurse, and other health care providers to learn as much as possible about your condition and the recommended treatment.

## Ask your doctor:

- What’s the name of the surgery, procedure, or treatment?
- What is it supposed to do, and what will I experience while it is being performed?
- Why is the treatment or surgery necessary and do I have other options?
- What benefits or improvement should I expect?
- What are possible risks, complications (infection, bleeding, reaction to anesthesia, etc.), side effects, or physical limitations that can be caused by the procedure or treatment and how likely is it that I may experience them?
- What will happen if I do not have the surgery, procedure, or treatment?



## Additional questions you may want to ask:

- How much experience do you have with this specific surgery or treatment, and how do your results compare with others who perform these procedures?
- Will a resident or intern perform my procedure? (You have the right to refuse this or to ask how the resident or intern will be supervised during the procedure.)
- What do I need to do to prepare for surgery, the hospital stay, and for my care when I’m discharged?
- Where will the surgery, procedure, or treatment be performed?
- What kind of anesthesia will I need?
- How long will it take for me to recover? Once I have this treatment or surgery, how will my life be affected?
- If tests have been ordered, do I need to prepare in advance for the tests? When will I receive the results and will I get them by phone or mail?
- Do you have any information I can take with me?
- What do I need to do next?
- How much will the surgery, procedure, or treatment cost? Is it a covered benefit of my health insurance plan? Do I need to pre-pay any portion? What types of payment options are available for any portion of the bill that is my responsibility?

## Steps to take for safety’s sake:

- To be more fully informed of your options, you may seek a second opinion from another physician.
- If you can’t remember or don’t understand something that was discussed, make a list of all your questions and call your doctor’s office. Do not make a decision about having surgery, a procedure, or treatment if there is something you do not understand.

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### **Advance planning:**

To ensure your wishes are carried out, consider preparing written documents that carefully set out instructions in case of terminal illness and/or if you cannot make your own health care decisions. These documents are called advance directives and consist of a living will and a durable power of attorney. Living wills explain your wishes regarding health care in case of a terminal illness. A durable power of attorney names a person to make decisions for you if you become unable to do so.

### **Remember to check with your health insurance plan to:**

- ✓ Confirm that the recommended procedure is a covered benefit.
- ✓ Notify them of the expected hospital stay.
- ✓ Get preauthorization, if needed.

**By working together, you and your health care providers can make a winning team that will make the best decisions for your good health!**



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