

Having an Operation

unfamiliar sounds. Don't be afraid, the staff will explain what is happening. Ask if you're worried about anything. If you are to have a spinal anesthetic, you may be asked to lie on your side or to sit up while the anesthetic is given through a fine needle into your back. After this you will be made comfortable and moved into the theater.

What should I expect immediately after my operation?

When your operation is finished, you will be taken to the recovery room. You may have an oxygen mask over your nose and mouth. Trained staff will watch you carefully while you are waking up and check your pulse and blood pressure regularly.

When the anesthetist is satisfied with your condition, you will be taken back to your ward. The oxygen mask will be removed and although the ward nurses will continue the observations, they will do so less frequently.

If you have had a large operation, you may be taken to the Intensive Care Unit because you may need extra medical or nursing care. People feel pain in different ways and at different levels. The pain or discomfort will also vary depending on your operation. If you have any discomfort, ask your doctor or nurse for analgesia (pain relief). You can have this regularly. Analgesia may be given as tablets or injections for as long as you need it.

You may feel nauseated and vomit after a general anesthetic. Again tell your doctor or nurse who can give you an anti-emetic (anti-vomiting drug). You can also have these regularly. A call button will be placed close by so you can call the nurse if necessary.

You may be given fluids and any drugs you need, by an infusion (drip) into a vein usually in your arm. This will stay in place until you are able to drink normally. When any tissue is cut, it's normal for blood and fluid to be produced. You may have one or two wound drains (tubes) in place to remove this. Drains are usually taken out after a few days.

Your wound (if you have one) may be stitched together or Steristrips (strips of sticky tape) may be used to close it. Some types of stitches can be absorbed by the body while others need to be removed several days after your operation.

A catheter (tube) may have been placed in your bladder to drain away urine. Catheters are not left in place any longer than necessary. If you have had an operation on your stomach or bowel, you won't usually be able to drink or eat for a few days. During the operation, the surgeon can't avoid handling your bowel and this can cause it to stop working temporarily.

Afterwards it takes several days to the bowel to start working again. You will have a thin tube inserted up your nose and down into your stomach. This is to drain off any fluid and stop you from being sick. It won't affect your ability to speak. Your nurse will have explained what is likely for you after your operation; you may have none of these procedures or only one or two.

What will happen later?

Everyone is an individual. What happens after your operation will depend on the size and type of operation itself and how quickly you recover.

If you have had a small operation, perhaps as a day patient, you will probably be able to go home the same evening. You may be given tablets to take for pain or vomiting and advice about what you can and can't do.

You will be given an appointment to come back to the hospital and told when your stitches need to be removed. If you have had a bigger operation, you will be staying in hospital longer. You will usually be encouraged to get up and move around with help, when you have recovered from the anesthetic.

Over the next few days any tubes you have will be removed, your surgeon and nurse will tell you when. You will be able to start drinking and then eating normally. Any stitches may be taken out between 7 to 10 days after your operation.

What can I do to help?

After your operation, these points may be helpful:

- Ask for pain relief or anti-vomiting drugs if you feel uncomfortable. If you are given tablets to take home, remember to take them regularly for the first couple of days.
- Check before drinking or eating anything. Your mouth may feel very dry and you will want to drink. Use a

mouthwash first of all and then start taking sips of water only. If you don't feel nausea and vomiting you will be able to drink more and then have something light to eat.

- Do the deep breathing and leg exercises explained by the physiotherapist and nurses.
- Call a nurse if you want to get out of bed; don't try to do it on your own. It takes up to 24 hours for the effect of general anesthetic to wear off. If you are going home on the day of your operation, ask what you can and cannot do. You will probably be advised not to drive a car or operate machinery.
- Don't smoke, if at all possible.
- Ask if you are unsure or anxious about anything. Everyone is here to help you.

In this booklet we have tried to answer the most common questions people ask. You may have more or difficult questions about your operation before it or afterwards. Please ask your surgeon or nurse if there is anything else you want to know.

Where can I get help?

If you have any queries or problems related to your operation, please contact your hospital doctor (Consultant) or one of his/her team on the following numbers.

Phone # : 0092-42-35905000

Ext: 2191, 5112 (Inpatient Department-Surgical Unit)
4112 (Secretary Surgical Oncology)

Days: Monday-Friday

Timings: 8:00am-5:00pm

Reference: CancerBacup (UK) (2002)

Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital and Research Centre
7A Block R-3, Johar Town, Lahore, Pakistan.
Tel: +92 42 35905000 | UAN: 111 155 555
www.shaukatkhanum.org.pk



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Memorial Cancer Hospital
and Research Centre



