Correct-Site Surgery

The American College of Surgeons (ACS) considers your safety to be of the highest priority when you have an operation and strongly urges individual hospitals and health organizations to develop guidelines to ensure that your operation is error-free. Correct-site surgery is an all-encompassing word that means that the right type of operation is performed at the correct place on the body of the correct patient. When there is a mistake in any part of this chain, the results can be devastating to the patient and his or her family. By taking an active role in your preoperative planning, you can help to eliminate the possibility of an error occurring during your operation.

What can I do to make sure the correct operation will be performed on the right place on my body?

Communication is the key. Discuss with your surgeon exactly what will be done before, during, and after your operation. And do not hesitate to ask the following questions:

- What is the name of the operation that will be done?
- Where or on what body part will you be operating?
- Are there any alternatives to this operation?
- What are the risks of this procedure?
- What is likely to happen if I don't have the operation?
- Who is in charge of the surgical team?
- About how long will it take to recover after the operation?
- Will the correct part of my body be marked before the operation begins?

And don't stop there. Keep asking questions about anything you or your family want to know and until you fully understand everything that has been planned. Next, ask team members what role they will play in the operation and in your care. And what will they do to ensure your safety? You should also carefully review your informed-consent form and verify the information on your patient-identity bracelet.

What should my surgeon do to ensure correct-site surgery?

Again, communication is the key—this time between the surgeon and the rest of the surgical team. Before your operation, the surgical team should involve you in clearly marking the operative site with an

indelible pen or marker. The team should also make a checklist using your records, imaging studies, and informed-consent form. They also should verify that they know who you are by asking your name and/or checking your hospital identification bracelet. And they should confirm that all of your allergies to medication and your medical history are well-known among the members of the surgical team. While in the operating room (OR), your surgical team should verbally verify among themselves the correct site of the operation. And your records and imaging studies (X-rays, and so on) should be in the OR at the time of your operation.

To help surgical team members communicate and, thus, eliminate the possibility of wrong-site surgery occurring, the American College of Surgeons has published a set of 10 guidelines for surgeons, their hospitals, and health organizations titled ***Statement on ensuring correct patient, correct site, and correct procedure surgery.***

Surgery by Surgeons

A fully trained surgeon is a physician who, after medical school, has gone through years of training in an accredited residency program to learn the specialized skills of a surgeon. One good sign of a surgeon's competence is certification by a national surgical board approved by the American Board of Medical Specialties. All such board-certified surgeons have satisfactorily completed an approved residency training program and have passed a rigorous specialty examination. The letters F.A.C.S. (Fellow of the American College of Surgeons) after a surgeon's name are a further indication of a physician's qualifications. Surgeons who become Fellows of the College have passed a comprehensive evaluation of their education, training, and professional qualifications, and their credentials have been found to be consistent with the standards established and demanded by the College.

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This information is published to educate you about your specific surgical procedures. It is not intended to take the place of a discussion with a qualified surgeon who is familiar with your situation. It is important to remember that each individual is different, and the reasons and outcomes of any operation depend upon the patient's individual condition.

The American College of Surgeons (ACS) is a scientific and educational organization that is dedicated to

the ethical and competent practice of surgery; it was founded to raise the standards of surgical practice and to improve the quality of care for the surgical patient. The ACS has endeavored to present information for prospective surgical patients based on current scientific information; there is no warranty on the timeliness, accuracy, or usefulness of this content.

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