Informed Consent for Surgery

Before having your operation, you will be asked to indicate that you understand the nature of the surgical procedure to be performed and that you give your permission for the operation.

This may appear to be a formality, but, in fact, this process should be taken very seriously. Before your operation, frankly discuss with your surgeon any questions or concerns that you have. Of course, not everyone wants to know all the specific details of the surgical procedure itself, but you should seek the answers to questions such as:

- What are the indications that have led your doctor to the opinion that an operation is necessary?
- What, if any, alternative treatments are available for your condition?
- What will be the likely result if you don't have the operation?
- What are the basic procedures involved in the operation?
- What are the risks?
- How is the operation expected to improve your health or quality of life?
- Is hospitalization necessary and, if so, how long can you expect to be hospitalized?
- What can you expect during your recovery period?
- When can you expect to resume normal activities?
- Are there likely to be residual effects from the operation?

Of course, your surgeon may volunteer much of this information. However, if you still have questions, don't hesitate to ask. Remember, the operation is being performed on you, and you should seek any information that you need to improve your understanding. Your doctor should be willing to take whatever time is necessary to make sure that you are fully informed. No doctor can, or should, guarantee outcomes, because each operation is different, depending upon the individual condition and response of each patient. Nonetheless, your surgeon will be able to give you a good idea of what to expect.

The principle of informed consent is endorsed by the American College of Surgeons, the largest organization of surgeons in the world with more than 54,000 members. The *Statements on Principles* of the College says, in part, "Patients should understand the indications for the operation, the risk involved, and the result that it is hoped to attain."

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 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 surgical training and skills; they also have demonstrated their commitment to high standards of ethical conduct. This evaluation is conducted according to national standards that were established to ensure that patients receive the best possible surgical care.

Prepared as a public service by the American College of Surgeons.

© 2024 American College of Surgeons

SURGICAL PATIENT EDUCATION PROGRAM
Prepare for the Best Recovery

AMERICAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS
DIVISION OF EDUCATION
Blended Surgical Education and Training for Life®

Last updated : 5/12/2020

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.

Informed Consent for Surgery originally published by American College of Surgeons

> This information is for general educational uses only. It may not apply to you and your personal medical needs. This information should not be used in place of a visit, call, consultation with or the advice of your physician or health care professional.

Communicate promptly with your physician or other health care professional with any health-related questions or concerns.

Be sure to follow specific instructions given to you by your physician or health care professional.

The contents of this site may be printed, but contents may not be reproduced nor stored in a retrieval system without permission.