

# Speak Up™ For Safe Surgery

Patients can help ensure that their surgery is safe and successful by being an informed and involved member of the care team. Here's how.

## Plan for your surgery



### Talk to your doctor about:

- Your regular medications and if and when you should stop taking them.
- When you need to stop eating or drinking.
- If you should be on a specific diet in the days or weeks leading up to the surgery.
- Removing nail polish and makeup. Your nails show how much oxygen you are getting, and your skin shows how well your blood is circulating.
- What devices or items you need to bring with you for your surgery, such as a walker. Be sure to leave jewelry and other valuables at home.
- Your options regarding anesthesia or sedation.
- Your pain control plan.

- Documents stating your advance directives and naming your health care proxy.
- Other questions you have.

### Have a friend, relative or patient advocate who can:

- Take you to and from the hospital or surgery facility.
- Be with you at the hospital or surgery facility.
- Communicate your patient directives to the care staff when you cannot.
- Remind you to ask questions which helps ensure you are getting the best care possible.

**Tip:** Find out if the hospital or surgery facility is accredited by The Joint Commission by visiting the Quality Check website at [www.qualitycheck.org](http://www.qualitycheck.org).

## Before your surgery



### You will be asked to sign an Informed Consent form. This form includes:

- Your name and other information that can help staff make sure you are receiving the right care.
- The type of surgery you are having and the exact location on your body.
- Any implants or devices you may have as a result of the surgery.
- Confirmation that you spoke to your doctor about any risks involved, different care plans available to you, and your post-surgery care plan.
- Your agreement to have the surgery.

**Tip:** Make sure the information is correct. If you have questions or if you do not understand something on the form, speak up!

- Someone from your care team will mark the spot that is being operated on.

- If you are having spine surgery, the Informed Consent, X-rays and other information will be used to confirm the exact place on your spine in the operating room after you are asleep. Prior to your surgery, check to make sure that your surgeon has all necessary spine imaging.
- Ask your surgeon if the care team will take a “time out” right before your surgery to make sure they are doing the surgery you agreed to on your Informed Consent form.

**Tip:** Marking usually happens while you are awake. However, if that's not possible, your patient advocate, family member or friend can ensure that the care team has marked the correct spot.

- Ask your surgeon about any incisions, drains or lines that may be made or inserted during your surgery and where they may be located.

## After your surgery



- Let your doctor or nurse know if you are in pain.
- For any new medications, find out the dosage, how often you should take them, and side-effects.
- Let your care team know if you have any allergies or reactions to medications before taking them.
- You may be given intravenous fluids. These are liquids that drip from a bag into your vein. Ask how long the liquid should take to run out. Tell the nurse if it seems to be dripping too fast or too slow.

- Let your care team know immediately if you develop any signs of infection, such as:
  - Fever, chills or fatigue.
  - Redness, warmth or pain near any surgical incision sites.
  - Discolored fluid exiting the surgical wound.
- Schedule your follow-up appointments, get prescriptions for new medications, and follow the instructions in your discharge plans.

## Special considerations for COVID-19 pandemic



### Find out about the hospital's or surgical facility's pandemic-related safety procedures, including:

- Wearing a face mask or covering when entering the facility.
- Cleaning and disinfecting protocols.
- What personal protective equipment will be used.
- How your care team will help protect you from the spread of the coronavirus.
- What to do if you develop a fever or cold symptoms the day before your surgery.

The goal of Speak Up™ is to help patients and their advocates become active in their care.

Speak Up™ materials are intended for the public and have been put into a simplified (i.e., easy-to-read) format to reach a wider audience. They are not meant to be comprehensive statements of standards interpretation or other accreditation requirements, nor are they intended to represent evidence-based clinical practices or clinical practice guidelines. Thus, care should be exercised in using the content of Speak Up™ materials. Speak Up™ materials are available to all health care organizations; their use does not indicate that an organization is accredited by The Joint Commission.