

# Preoperative Instructions

We recommend you pre-register in person so that you are familiar with the hospital the day of surgery. The location for pre-registration is the same place you will first go on the day of surgery. Our office will provide you with the date and time. Otherwise, you can pre-register by phone.

On the day of surgery, you must arrive AT LEAST TWO (2) hours before the scheduled time. Your surgery may start sooner or later than expected. We will attempt to notify you of time changes as soon as possible.

## Day Before Surgery

Your anesthesiologist and the hospital may contact you the day before surgery with additional information. The anesthesiologist will introduce him/herself and ask a few health questions. The hospital may give you new information regarding when to arrive and what time your surgery will begin. If this information conflicts with what you have been told please contact our office. The hospital may also give you instructions regarding your medications, the process before your surgery, or the process after your surgery. Some of this information may be correct and some may not. This is “general” information that may not be correct regarding your specific surgery. This instruction sheet will provide the correct information you need to know.

Preparing for surgery and recovering after can be a stressful time. We realize this is a significant experience for you and your family, and want to make it as comfortable as possible. Here are some answers to common questions:

- “Will it affect my surgery if I don’t sleep well the night before?”
  - No. Many patients are nervous and have trouble sleeping. This will not affect the outcome of your surgery.
- “Can I eat or drink the morning of surgery?”
  - No. It is important that the last meal and last time you drink anything occurs the evening before surgery. It may be dangerous to put you asleep for surgery if your stomach has food or liquid in it. We realize that you will be hungry, but rest assured, you will eat as soon as possible after the procedure. We also realize many patients enjoy morning coffee, but you must not drink anything, including coffee, the morning of surgery.
- “Should I stop taking my Aspirin, Plavix, Coumadin, Xarelto, Pradaxa, or Eliquis prior to surgery?”
  - Yes. Unless directed by your physician, you should stop all of these medications before surgery. Different medications need to be stopped at different times, so check with your primary care physician. Please let us know if you take these medications.
- “Can I take my medications the morning of surgery?”
  - Yes, in some cases. You may take your pain medication, blood pressure medication and seizure medication with a small sip of water the morning of surgery. If you take medications for diabetes please ask your primary care physician if and how much you should take. If you have questions about a certain medication, please call and ask us or your primary care physician.
- “I smoke. May I smoke the morning of surgery?”

- No. We strongly encourage all of our patients to stop smoking weeks to months before surgery as smoking can lead to a poor surgical outcome. Smoking makes it hard to breathe after surgery and may cause you to have trouble healing. The toxins in the cigarette/cigar are still in your blood long after the last time you smoked and can cause problems even if it's a few hours before the procedure. Additionally smoking or using other illicit drugs (even cannabis) before surgery may alter your blood pressure and may make it dangerous to perform your surgery. Smoking before your surgery may result in cancellation.
- *“Can I use marijuana around the time of my surgery?”*
  - No. We understand that marijuana is legal in Colorado and some patients use it for pain management. However marijuana may be detrimental to your health and ability to undergo anesthesia. You need to stop using marijuana at least a few days before surgery. Failure to do so may result in cancellation of your surgery.
- *“Will I wake up during surgery?”*
  - No. The anesthesiologist will keep you completely asleep for the duration of the procedure.
- *“Will I have pain after surgery?”*
  - Yes. You may experience pain after your surgery. You will be given pain medications, but it may take a few days to get your pain under control. And even on the pain medications, expect that you may have at least some pain. This pain should decrease with time and therapy. We will do everything possible to make you comfortable.
  - We will provide pain medications and possibly muscle relaxants after surgery for up to ~30 days, unless you are already receiving them from another provider. After this immediate postoperative period, you will need to obtain pain medications from your primary care physician or pain management specialist. If we discover you are receiving pain medications from multiple providers after surgery, we may immediately stop providing them.
- *“How long will I be in the hospital?”*
  - Every surgery and every patient is different. You may be discharged home the same day following surgery or you may stay for a few days. We will attempt to let you know how long we expect you to stay in the hospital, but our estimation may change.
- *“Will a family member be able to stay with me in the hospital?”*
  - In most cases, a single family member can stay in the room with you. There are certain exceptions and so we cannot guarantee this. Be prepared that your family member will be sleeping on a reclining chair that may be small and uncomfortable. They may not sleep in the hospital bed with you.
- *“When will I see you after surgery?”*
  - I will see you immediately after surgery as you wake up from anesthesia. However most patients do not remember this because they are highly medicated and are still waking up. I will always be with you as you wake up and then I will speak to your family or friend if they are in the waiting area. I may not see you again until the following day, but we have a highly trained staff who communicates with me routinely to make sure you are doing well.
- *“How often will I see you after surgery?”*
  - Every day you will either see me or my associates. However, I will make every attempt to personally see you. Our team has worked together for a long

time, so be assured that I am aware of how you are doing each day and making sure you are informed and comfortable.

- *“Will I receive therapy in the hospital and will I need therapy after I leave?”*
  - After most surgeries you will receive both physical and occupational therapy in the days following surgery until you leave. Depending on how you are doing, you may need to temporarily go to a rehab facility after you leave or have therapists work with you at home.

## **Preoperative Holding**

After you register, you will be escorted to the preoperative holding area. Your family and friends may accompany you (only ~4 people are allowed in this area with each patient). You will be instructed to remove your clothes in privacy, and change into a hospital gown. A nurse will start an IV, collect your belongings, and give you instructions.

We recommend your family/friends hold your belongings during surgery so they are not lost. We advise you not to wear any jewelry or wear expensive clothing to the hospital. You will have to remove all jewelry prior to the surgery (including wedding rings). We do not recommend you bringing anything expensive to the hospital.

The anesthesiologist will meet you and explain the medications you will receive during surgery. They will explain how they put you to sleep and how they wake you up. I will also meet with you and go over the procedure again. We can answer any questions you have, so please do not hesitate with anything you are concerned about.

Family and friends are encouraged to ask questions, but I ask they do not expect to review from scratch why or what type of surgery you are having. If they wish to know this information, they should call the office ahead of time or come to your preoperative appointments.

## **Operating Room**

Prior to leaving the preoperative holding room, the anesthesiologist will give you some medication to make you comfortable and a little sleepy. However you will be awake when we bring you to the operating room. You will see many nurses and staff in the operating room and you will see a lot of equipment. Everyone will be wearing masks except you. It may seem bright with all of the lights. We will transfer you to the operative bed where the anesthesiologist will put you to sleep. You may see different staff members doing many different things to prepare for your surgery.

## **Postoperative Room**

After surgery you will be brought to the recovery area. You may be in pain and we will start giving you pain medications. You may or may not remember this part, depending on how awake you are. You will stay in this area for about 30 minutes to 1 hour before you go to your hospital room. Because many patients who also just finished surgery are here and the nurses are very busy caring for you, your family and friends may not see you in this area. You will see your family soon when you go to your hospital room.

## **Hospital Room**

You will either stay in the intensive care unit or on our surgery floor after your surgery. All rooms are private. All rooms have bathrooms, a television, and a phone. You will be allowed to have visitors, but only a few at a time. Again, we will make every arrangement to allow a family member to stay with you at night, however there are certain circumstances where this is not possible. Please remember that we are trying to make you comfortable and are facilitating your healing process as quickly as possible, which may require you to be alone at night. Also, the nurses change shifts occasionally and may ask that you temporarily leave while they exchange information. No one is attempting to hide information from you or your family.

Hospital beds are sometimes uncomfortable, so you may wish to bring blankets or pillows from home. Please remember that while our hospital is very clean, many sick patients are here. Items from home may make you more comfortable, but they may also bring germs home.

You may wear clothes from home if they are more comfortable. Please also remember, you just had surgery so blood and fluids may stain these clothes. Bringing books, music, and things that entertain you. Bring your own toiletries (toothbrush, toothpaste, deodorant, razors, lotion, etc...) as your own products may make your stay more pleasant. If your products interfere with your healing, however, we may ask you refrain from using it. For example, do not apply lotion or some shampoos on or around your incision. Additionally, the more you bring the higher the chance items may be lost or forgotten. And do not bring anything expensive or valuable.

Lastly, our hospital food is pretty good, but you may wish to have family or friends bring you food from home.

## **Other Providers**

I am board certified in brain, spine and peripheral nerve surgery. Many patients have other medical conditions and I may ask other providers (physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, etc...) to see you as well during the hospital stay to treat these conditions outside of my expertise.

## **Discharge**

We will attempt to notify you of your expected discharge as far in advance as possible. You will need to make appropriate arrangements to have a family member or friend drive you home. You may not drive yourself. We will also provide you with discharge instructions, although they are present on our website. These will explain what you may or may not do after surgery. They will explain how to take care of your incision. They will tell you when to make an appointment at our office. We will also give you prescriptions for medications, which you will need to fill at a local pharmacy.

If you find you need a different pain medication or muscle relaxant after surgery, or you need a refill, you must call our office during normal business hours as these medications cannot be called in to your pharmacy by phone.

Due to changes in Colorado's laws, we are only able to prescribe ~1-2 weeks of pain medications and muscles relaxants at a time. You may need to come to our office and obtain another script prior to your first postoperative appointment. We understand this may be inconvenient.