



When Planning for Surgery

The single most important way you can stay healthy is to be an active member of your own health care team. One way to get high-quality health care is to find and use information and take an active role in all of the decisions made about your care. This card will help you when planning for surgery.

No surgery is risk free. It is important to learn about the possible benefits and risks involved in the surgical procedure you are about to have. Research has shown that patients who are informed about their procedure can better work with their doctors to make the right decisions.

Getting a second opinion is important. Your doctor, surgeon, health plan, or local medical society can help you find someone who can give you a second opinion. Before seeking a second opinion, make sure your health plan will cover this expense.

Before having surgery, ask your physician these questions:

1. What operation are you recommending?
2. Why do I need the operation?
3. Are there alternatives to surgery?
4. What are the benefits of having the operation?
5. What are the risks of having the operation?
6. What will happen if I don't have this operation?
7. Where can I get a second opinion?

8. What has been your experience in doing the operation? How many have you performed?
9. Where will the operation be done?
10. What kind of anesthesia will I need?
11. How long will it take me to recover?
12. How much will the operation cost?

Remember, quality matters, especially when it comes to your health. For more information on health care quality and materials to help you make health care decisions, visit <http://www.ahrq.gov/consumer/pathqpack.htm>

