



# Meeting your surgeon

## Island Health Surgery Resources

Meeting with your surgeon about your health condition can be a little overwhelming. Preparing for your visit can help.

Use the suggestions in this guide to make a list of things you want to remember to tell your surgeon, and the questions you want to ask.

This guide also has suggestions on how to ask questions if you do not understand all of the information you are given, and where you can learn more about your health problem.





# Preparing to Meet Your Surgeon

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## Make a list



It may help to write things down before your visit and to bring your notes with you. This helps your surgeon give you better care and helps both of you make the most of the visit.

Here are some ideas:

- Your Personal Health Number and the name and phone number of your contact person.
- Names and contact information of doctors and specialists involved in your care.
- A list of your allergies (medications, latex, food, etc.).
- A list of your medications, vitamins and herbal supplements that you are taking, including dosages.
- The names of any medications that may be toxic to your medical condition.
- Copies of recent test results if the tests were done by a different doctor.
- Copies of any special protocols you may have regarding your health care needs.





Notes:

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# Meeting Your Surgeon

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When you're not feeling well or you're worried about your health, it may be harder than usual to understand what your doctor is saying.

- If possible, have a family member or friend come with you to your appointment. He or she can take notes, ask questions to clarify information, and help you remember what your doctor says.
- If you don't speak English, bring an interpreter with you.
- Be ready to discuss what your main symptoms are, when they started, and what you have done to treat them so far.
- Be ready to discuss your medical history and existing conditions that may affect your ability to:
  - » Manage pain (e.g., fibromyalgia, history of substance use).
  - » Manage anaesthesia (e.g. malignant hyperthermia, mitochondrial disorders, sleep apnea, vomiting after surgery).
  - » Heal after surgery (e.g. diabetes, peripheral vascular disease, or smoking).
- Write down the diagnosis, treatment plan, and guidelines for self-care and follow-up visits or calls.
- Be honest and direct about what you do or do not plan to do.



## Deciding on Surgery

Below are some questions that you may want to ask your surgeon to help you decide about going ahead with surgery. If you do not understand your doctor's answers, ask for clarification.



- Why do I need this operation?
- What are the benefits of this operation and how long will they last?
- What are the risks and possible complications of the operation?
- Are there alternatives to surgery?
- How quickly will I need to make a decision about surgery?
- How often do you do this type of surgery?
- How long will I have to wait for this operation?
- What should I do if I change my mind about having the surgery or need to re-schedule?
- What can I do to be the healthiest I can be before surgery?





## Preparing for your surgery

Below are some questions that you may want to ask your surgeon about surgery day and your recovery:



- What kind of anaesthesia will I have?
- How long will my operation take?
- How will my pain be managed after my operation?
- Will you visit me in the hospital after surgery?
- Will I need someone at home to help me with my recovery? For how long?
- When can I go back to work or resume regular activities?
- Will I need special equipment (e.g., bath chair, cane, crutches, walker, wheelchair etc. after surgery)?
- Will I need rehabilitation (e.g., physiotherapy or occupational therapy) after surgery?
- Will I need a Home Care Nurse to visit me after my surgery?
- Do I need to make my own post-surgery follow-up appointments with my surgeon and family doctor?
- Where can I get information to help me and my caregiver prepare for surgery and recovery at home?





## Summary

We hope you have found the information and suggestions in this pamphlet helpful. Remember – taking an active role in your health care will help you get the answers you need, and get the care that best meets your needs.

For more suggestions on how to prepare for your surgery, and tips on meeting with your doctor and more, please review the resources on this page.

# Resources

## *Talk to your Doctor*

- email: [www.bluewavebc.ca/take-action/talk-to-your-doctor/](http://www.bluewavebc.ca/take-action/talk-to-your-doctor/)

This website has tips on how to manage your appointments with your doctor, what you can do to prepare for your appointment, what to do during appointments, and more.

## *HealthLinkBC*

- phone: **8.1.1**
- email: [www.healthlinkbc.ca](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca)

A free-of-charge health information and advice phone line available in British Columbia. Operated by HealthLinkBC ([www.healthlinkbc.ca](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca)), this service can help you find health information and services, or connect you directly with a Registered Nurse, Registered Dietitian or a Pharmacist.

## *Island Health Surgery Resources*

- email: [www.viha.ca/](http://www.viha.ca/)
  - Meeting your surgeon
  - Improving your health before surgery
  - Getting ready for and recovering from surgery



Island Health Surgery Resources