Health Tips: Having Surgery

Before surgery
Surgical procedures can make people anxious. Knowing what to expect and being properly informed can help to ease anxious feelings and help you recover faster. The more a person knows about their surgery, the more they can take part in the recovery.

After the decision has been made by a person and their doctor to have surgery, there may be a waiting period before the procedure takes place. This can vary anywhere from one day to several weeks. This is the time for a person to prepare for their surgery. A person's doctor should be able answer any questions they have and also provide them with the following information:

• Whether a person is going to be an outpatient or an inpatient. "Outpatient" means that after the surgery has been performed they will be able to return home. "Inpatient" means that they will have to stay in the hospital for a few days following the procedure.
• Who will be performing the operation as well as other members of the surgical team.
• The dates of their admission and surgery as well as the location. Some outpatient surgeries are performed in the doctor’s office, surgical center, or clinic.
• If there is a risk of a large blood loss during surgery, a person may require a blood transfusion. If the surgery is more than 4 weeks away, they may have the opportunity to store some of their own blood.

Pre-surgical Visit
A week or two prior to surgery, it may be necessary to have a physical exam and tests. Some of the tests that may be needed are blood and urine tests, chest x-ray, and an electrocardiogram (EKG). It is also important the doctor knows of any changes in health, medications or symptoms that occur before the procedure.

The day before surgery
To avoid complications during and after surgery, a person's doctor may ask that they:

• Take a laxative and eat lightly depending on the surgery
• Not drink alcohol 24 hours prior to the surgery
• Take an enema two or three days prior to surgery depending on the procedure
• Not eat or drink anything for 6-12 hours prior to surgery. It is important the doctor knows if a person eats or drinks during this time. For people with diabetes, the doctor will let them know when they can have their last meal.
• Take certain medications with a sip of water on the morning of the surgery.
• Stop smoking or at least cut down on how much a person smokes prior to the surgery.

The day of surgery
On the day of surgery it is important a person:

• Showers, washes their hair, and removes any nail polish or acrylic nails before arriving
• Not wear make up
• Leaves all jewelry at home. If the procedure requires them to stay overnight, bring only necessary items such as a case for glasses, contacts, or dentures
• Wears loose-fitting clothes that will easily fit over a bandage
• Makes sure that someone is available to drive them home for outpatient procedures

Essence is an HMO plan with a Medicare contract. Enrollment in Essence depends on contract renewal.
Upon arrival a person will be given an ID bracelet which contains their name, birth date, and doctor’s name. A person should check and make sure that the information is correct as this will be used to identify them throughout their stay in the hospital. A doctor or nurse will then review their health history, drug allergies, and allergies to food or latex as well as ask what medications they are taking.

Pre-operative preparation

Just before surgery a person may experience:

- Changing from their clothes into a gown and cap. They may be given special stockings to wear or given medications to prevent blood clots from forming in their legs.
- Being taken to an area to wait until the surgical team is ready for them. Friends and family members may be able to wait with them.
- Confirmation by a doctor or nurse of their name, birth date, and type of surgery prior to entering the operating room. Marks may be applied to their body if the surgery is to be done on a specific area.
- An anesthesiologist will discuss which type of anesthesia they will receive during the operation.
- An IV line will be placed into a vein in their arm or wrist that will supply fluids, medication, or blood to their body during and after the procedure.

In the operating room

Once a person is in the operating room they will be moved to the operating table at which point monitors will be attached to various parts of their body. These monitors measure their heart, pulse, oxygen level, and blood pressure. An oxygen mask may be used to give them more oxygen.

The surgical team may ask them for their name, date of birth, and what operation they are having once more and a final review of medical records and tests may be done.

Once a person has been properly sedated, the surgical team will begin the procedure.