

Surgery

The key question to ask is, “What proof is there that the treatment being offered will cure, extend actual survival, or increase the quality of life?” Ask to see scientific papers and reports on the treatment. If necessary, seek professional help in interpreting this information.

1. Why are you recommending surgery?
2. Why do you feel this treatment is the best option for me?
3. What is the success rate for this procedure?
4. What is the goal of this procedure?
5. What are the benefits and risks of this surgery?
6. What is the risk of death or serious disability?
7. Do you feel the benefits outweigh the risks? Why?
8. What are the possible consequences of postponing the surgery?
9. What will happen if I don't have the surgery?
10. Will surgery increase the risk of metastasis (cancer spreading to other areas)?
11. Will surgery be my only treatment?
12. What is the name of the procedure I will have?
13. Are there any less extensive, less deforming, less painful operations than the one you are suggesting? If yes, what are they?
14. What are the risks and benefits of the other possible treatments?
15. Where can I find out more about these alternatives?

Undergoing Surgery

16. How many of these or similar operations have you personally performed?
17. Exactly what will you do — in simple terms?
18. How long will the procedure take?
19. Will I need to go to hospital to have this treatment? If yes, how many days will I have to spend in the hospital?
20. Will I feel pain or discomfort during the treatment?
21. Will I be given a local or a general anaesthetic?
22. What will this treatment do to my body?
23. What parts of my body will be targeted?
24. Will I have stitches or staples?
25. Can I go home afterwards?

Following Surgery

26. Will I have pain or discomfort after treatment?
27. How long will it last?
28. How can it be managed?
29. Will it make me prone to infections?
30. Will I have to have drains, catheters, intravenous lines, transfusions?
31. Will I be nauseous?
32. Will I be exhausted?
33. Will surgery affect my usual activities? If so, for how long?
34. How long will it take for scars to heal?
35. What kinds of feelings (such as sadness, anger, vulnerability, loss of control) am I likely to have after the surgery ?
36. Where can I find help coping with my feelings if I need it?
37. Will I need to take time off work or adjust my work schedule?

38. Will I need help with daily activities following surgery?
39. What are the possible side-effects?
40. When would they start?
41. How are they usually managed?
42. Are there any side-effects that I should report right away?
43. Who do I call?
44. When will have the stitches or staples removed?
45. What symptoms – swelling, fever, nausea and so on – might be a sign of a problem?
46. Can the cancer spread after surgery?
47. Is there anything I can do to speed up the healing process?

Long Term

48. Are there any possible long-term effects?
49. What are they and how are they usually managed?
50. What symptoms might be a sign of a problem?
51. Will I need physiotherapy?
52. How long will it take to heal overall?
53. Will the surgery affect my sex life?
54. Will I be able to work?
55. When will I know if surgery was successful?
56. What are the chances of the cancer returning?
57. What follow-up tests do I need, and how often will I need them?
58. Where can I get more detailed information about this procedure?
59. (For women): Will this surgery affect my chances of getting pregnant and having a normal baby?
60. (For men): Will surgery affect my chances of fathering a child?
61. When will I know if the surgery is proving successful?
62. What follow-up tests do I need, and how often will I need them?
63. Where can I get more information about this procedure?

Family concerns

64. How does a partner or spouse usually react?
65. What can we do to help each other?
66. How can I talk about the changes in my body with my partner?
67. How do I talk to my friends and family about cancer and my treatment?
68. How do family and friends usually react?
69. What support is available for my family members?
70. Where can I get more detailed information about family support?

SURGERY RESULTS

71. How big is the tumour?
72. Were you able to remove it entirely?
73. What stage is the cancer?
74. What does that mean?
75. How many lymph nodes were removed (if any)?
76. Did any of them show cancer?
77. Has the cancer spread anywhere else?
78. What is the grade of the cancer?
79. How fast is it growing?
80. What are the chances that the cancer will come back after treatment?

RECONSTRUCTIVE SURGERY

80. What is Reconstructive Surgery?
81. Do I need it?
82. Why do I need it?
83. What types of reconstructive surgery are available to me?
84. What is the name of the operation that is recommended for me?
85. Can you explain the procedure?
86. What are the benefits and risks of reconstruction?
87. Where can I meet others who have had reconstruction?
88. When is the best time to do reconstructive surgery for someone in my situation?
89. What steps will I go through before, during and after my reconstruction?
90. How long will I be in the hospital?
91. How long will it take for me to recover?
92. What are the short-term side effects?
93. Will I regain my normal function after the reconstructive surgery?
94. What is prosthesis?
95. Will I need one?
96. How do I get a prosthesis?
97. Where can I get more detailed information on Reconstructive Surgery?

Any other questions you may have.

Questions To Ask The Anaesthesiologist

1. What medication will I be given before going into the operating room?
2. Who will give me the medication and the anaesthesia?
3. How will they be given to me?
4. Will my allergies be a problem?
5. What type of anaesthetic will you give me?
6. What are the side effects?
7. What are the risks?
8. How long will the operation take?
9. How long will it be before I wake up?
10. Will I go to a recovery room after the operation?
11. Is a general anaesthetic necessary for this operation?
12. Will any of the over-the-counter medicines I'm taking be a problem?

You are the most important member of your healthcare team. Your situation is unique, and your treatment should be developed just for you. You can participate in your care by doing the following:

Beinvolved in decisions that affect you.

Learn about your cancer and all available treatment options.

Go to all your doctor, clinic and hospital appointments.

Ask your team how to contact them between appointments if you have any questions that need answers quickly.

Talk to your team about your worries or concerns.



[Cancer Ireland](http://www.cancerireland.ie)