

## DAY SURGERY AND SHORT STAY SURGERY – THE PATIENT’S PERSPECTIVE

Information and advice for patients

Day case surgery is becoming more and more common and is starting to approach 70% of all surgery performed. While day case surgery includes a number of relatively minor procedures, surgery of any sort is an event not to be taken lightly. You should expect and will receive the highest standards of professional care by all members of the team who will be involved.

The whole approach to the surgical procedure can be thought of in terms of a “Care Pathway”. What this means is that there are certain stages covering everything from getting you ready to the time when you are fully recovered. Prior to embarking on your “Care Pathway” there are some things you can do to help.

### 1 Your own preparation

As a patient, try to get yourself in the best condition for surgery. Some examples are:

If you are overweight, try to reduce your weight as much as you can, ideally so that your body mass index (BMI) is lower than 30.

$$\text{BMI} = \frac{W}{H \times H} \quad \text{where } W \text{ is weight in kilograms and } H \text{ is height in metres.}$$

As an example, if your weight is 90 Kg and your height is 1.8 m, then your BMI is:

$$\frac{90}{1.8 \times 1.8} = \frac{90}{3.24} = 27.8$$

Smoking affects your breathing so if you smoke try to give up several weeks before your planned surgery date — the earlier the better. If you just can’t give up, try to cut down. The less you smoke or the longer you have stopped will help your anaesthetist because of the reduced risk of breathing problems.

Any long term medical condition you might have should be discussed with your GP or at your outpatients clinic and you should ask for a check up. You should also make sure this is known to the preoperative team when you attend for

assessment.

Likewise, if you are on any long term medication, you should discuss this with your GP or at outpatients to check whether any change to your medication is advisable before your surgery.

## 2 Your Care Pathway

The “Care Pathway” covers the different stages of preparation, operation and recovery that you will go through.

It is a systematic approach designed to make the surgical procedure itself as safe as possible and the result as good as possible. One significant part of the pathway is ensuring that the team involved are fully aware of your medical history and where appropriate, can tailor the procedure to suit you and your individual needs.

2.1 The first stage is your own preparation as described previously. Use your GP or the Outpatients’ Clinic to help you to be in the best condition for your surgery.

2.2 Next, you need to be formally assessed. This is basically to have a detailed check on your state of health and your suitability for the planned surgery.

This may take place at a formal pre-operative assessment clinic or at an outpatient clinic or in some cases in a hospital ward. It very much depends upon the type of procedure together with the working practices of the hospital concerned.

You are likely to have some medical tests which could range from testing your physical responses such as lung function or joint flexibility through to blood tests or checks on organ function such as kidneys or liver.

As well as having some medical tests, you are likely to be asked to complete a questionnaire (this won’t be because the pre-operative staff do not have information about you; it is likely that they will be looking for any significant changes in your health).

The planned procedure; information as to the type of anaesthesia suggested; the length of the procedure; and the postoperative recovery process will all be discussed with you.

You will be given very clear instructions as to any specific things you should or should not do when arriving at the hospital for surgery. One aspect in particular is often relevant which is to what extent you should have stopped eating and

drinking prior to your operation.

2.3 At your pre-operative assessment you should have the opportunity to ask questions about the surgical procedure and the planned anaesthetic. In addition, you should also be able to discuss your postoperative recovery and what you may need to plan for in order to help your recovery to be as straightforward as possible.

2.4 Your formal consent to both surgery and anaesthesia needs to be agreed and it is important that you properly understand and consent to the whole planned procedure. For this reason, it is not unusual for your consent to be sought some time prior to surgery — possibly at your pre-operative assessment. The actual timing may vary but you need to be happy that you have had sufficient information for long enough to reach a decision about giving your consent.

2.5 Then we have the actual surgical procedure. This should be carried out as discussed with you at your pre-operative assessment and similarly your anaesthetic will be carried out as planned and you will be observed and monitored throughout by your anaesthetist.

2.6 Lastly there will be your immediate postoperative recovery. The period you will spend in recovery is very much dependent upon the anaesthetic procedure used, the type of surgery you have had and the prescribed type and amount of pain relief medication that you might be given. You can often feel a little disoriented at first and find it hard to focus on what people are saying or doing and provision of strong pain relief may heighten this. You are likely to be given some refreshment and once the postoperative staff are happy that you are back to 'normal' and your condition is stable you can then proceed to the next stage.

2.7 This is an examination to check that the outcome of the surgery is as planned and that you are reminded of any procedures that you or your carer need to carry out or be aware of when you are recovering away from the hospital after discharge. This will cover such things as your medication, any requirement to change dressings and any physical symptoms that you might experience such as headache, or soreness at the site of the surgery. If you have had general anaesthesia through a tube in your throat you might experience a sore throat. If this is uncomfortable, you will be given some medication to help the problem.

2.8 Next is discharge from the hospital so that you can return home and start your rehabilitation. It is most unlikely that you would be allowed to drive yourself on the basis of having received anaesthetic treatment and you should wait some time before doing your normal everyday tasks. A member of the anaesthetic staff will be able to advise you in more detail on this.

2.9 The final stage is your recovery at home. You may receive visits from nurses, physiotherapists or other community health staff and you may be asked to visit an outpatient clinic to check your progress. Your GP will have been informed of the surgical outcome and indeed some of the subsequent healthcare visits you receive may be provided through Primary Care rather than through your hospital department.