

General Information on Preparing for Surgery: **Comox Valley Hospital Department of Anesthesia 2022**

How can I make sure I am as healthy as possible prior to surgery?

- If you smoke- **Quitting smoking** several weeks before the operation will reduce the risk of breathing problems during your anesthetic and after your surgery. It may also decrease your risk of infection at your surgical site.
- If you have obesity - reducing your weight through **exercise and a healthy diet** will reduce many of the extra risks you face during your anesthetic and after your surgery. It may also make the surgery easier.
- If you have loose teeth or crowns, a **visit to your dentist** before the operation may reduce the risk of damage to your teeth during the anesthetic.
- If you have a **long-standing medical problem** that you are not well controlled (e.g. diabetes, asthma or COPD, thyroid problems, chronic pain or heart problems), check with your primary care provider whether there is anything you can do to improve it.
- If you have **new symptoms** such as shortness of breath, chest heaviness, fainting spells that have not yet been brought to the attention of a doctor - ensure you seek care BEFORE surgery either with your primary care provider or in the emergency department depending on the type of issue. It is important that your health is stable prior to surgery.
- It is also important that you consider any mental health concerns such as **anxiety and depression**, as these too can make a difference to your surgery and recovery.
- **Increasing your activity** in the weeks before surgery can improve your heart function and fitness levels. Studies have shown that this can make a big difference to your recovery from surgery. For most people aiming for 150 minutes per week of physical activity is the goal.

What is “prehabilitation”?

Prehabilitation is the process of Improving Patients’ Health prior to Surgery. Click on the **links below** to learn how Patient Prehabilitation before your surgery will help you during your surgery and during your surgical recovery.

“Prehabilitation: Better Before. Better After.”

Click on the link below or search “BC Surgical Prehabilitation Video”

BC Surgical Patient Prehabilitation - Overview – YouTube Video

BC Surgical Prehabilitation - Patient Education Videos – YouTube Videos

Click on ***PATIENT EDUCATION VIDEOS*** to have access to informative videos on:

- Anemia
- Anxiety
- Cardiac Risk
- Frailty
- Glucose Control
- Pain
- Physical Activity
- Nutrition
- Sleep Apnea
- Smoking Cessation
- Social Supports
- Substance Use
- Weight Loss

How should I prepare for recovery after surgery?

- It is best to plan early for your recovery at home afterwards and let your friends and family know how they can best help you. Think about what you will eat and whether you need to make any changes at home to make your recovery easier.
- If you return home the same day after having had an anesthetic of any kind (including a spinal or sedation), you will need to organize a responsible adult to take you home by car or taxi and stay with you for up to 24 hours. Your judgment will be impaired for 24hrs.
- Consider having over the counter medications available at home for pain (such as acetaminophen, ibuprofen or naproxen), nausea (gravol/dimenhydrinate), and constipation (PEG/restorolax). **Make sure you ask your surgeon or anesthesiologist which of these medications is safe for you before you take them.**
- Consider having ice or heating pads if you use these for pain control.

What should I bring to relax while waiting for surgery?

There is often a lot of waiting before and after surgery so make sure you bring something to do. Magazines, books, listening to music through headphones can all be helpful. There is guest wifi available in Comox Hospital but it doesn't work well for streaming television/movies so plan ahead and download some.

What else should I bring to the hospital for surgery?

- CPAP/BiPAP machine (if you have one)
- Wear comfortable clothing and shoes that can slip on easily
- Toiletries if you are to stay the night in hospital
- Remove all your jewelry and leave it at home
- Remove nail polish/gels on your fingernails
- Do not smoke or vape on your day of surgery
- Keep any valuables at home whenever possible, or give them to your family/caregiver the day of surgery

*What if I get sick **before** surgery?*

It is important that you contact your surgeon's office and the surgical booking office if you are unwell in the days prior to surgery. Depending on your illness you may require additional testing or even postponement of your surgical date in order to keep you and the hospital staff safe.

Why am I asked to 'fast' before surgery?

The hospital should give you clear instructions about eating and drinking. Usually there is no solid food after midnight and only clear fluids (e.g. water, clear apple juice, black tea/coffee) until 3 hours before your surgical time. These instructions are important. If there is food or liquid in your stomach during your anesthetic, it could come up into your throat and lungs and endanger your life. If you have diabetes your fasting instructions may be different.

If you do not follow the fasting instructions your surgery may be postponed for your own safety.

What do I do with my medication before surgery?

Many medications can be taken with a sip of water on the day of surgery as you normally would. You will receive written instructions about what medications need to be stopped and when before surgery and when to restart them.

- If you take **medication for diabetes** it is extremely important that you understand and follow the instructions carefully for your medications.
- If you take **blood thinning medication** such as warfarin, clopidogrel or rivaroxaban, you will need to discuss with your surgeon, anesthesiologist or the preoperative assessment team whether or when you should stop taking them. They will look at any risks of bleeding and risks of stopping the treatment and make a plan with you. Your nurse will give you clear instructions before your surgery.

If your medication instructions are not followed exactly we may need to postpone your operation for your own safety.

What is anesthesia?

Anesthesia stops you feeling pain and unpleasant sensations. It can be given in various ways and does not always need to make you unconscious.

There are different types of anesthesia, depending on the way they are given:

- **Local anesthesia** involves injections that numb a small part of your body. You stay conscious but free from pain.
- **Regional anesthesia**, e.g. a spinal or epidural, involves injections that numb a larger or deeper part of the body. You stay conscious or receive some sedation, but are free from pain. For some surgeries you may be aware of pressure sensations.
- **General anesthesia** gives a state of controlled unconsciousness. It is essential for some operations and procedures. You are unconscious and feel nothing.
- **Sedation** gives a 'sleep like' state and is often used with a local or regional anesthetic. Sedation may be light or deep and you may remember everything, something or nothing after sedation.

What is an Anesthesiologist?

Anesthesiologists are doctors with at least 5 years of specialist training who:

- discuss with you the type or types of anesthetic that are suitable for your operation. If there are choices available, they will help you choose.
- discuss the risks of anesthesia with you
- agree on a plan with you for your anesthetic and pain control afterwards
- give your anesthetic and are responsible for your wellbeing and safety throughout your surgery and in the recovery room.

Meeting your Anesthesiologist:

Your anesthesiologist will meet you before the operation. This may be in the preoperative assessment clinic or on the day of your operation in the surgical daycare area. They will discuss the type of anesthetic you might have, including benefits, risks and your preferences. They will decide with you which anesthetic would be best for you. Not all types of anesthesia are appropriate for all types of operations.

If there is a choice of anesthetic, the decision on which to use will depend on:

- The type of operation you are having
- Any medical problems you have
- Your preferences and the reasons for them

Why are surgeries sometimes canceled?

Very occasionally there is a delay in the operating room usually due to a complication or an emergency surgery. If this delay is severe it may be necessary to postpone a patient's operation. We do everything in our power to avoid this as we understand the planning, fasting, time off work that goes into coming for a surgery. If we do need to delay your surgery you will be offered another surgical date at your time of cancellation. We don't postpone a surgery unless we absolutely have to, if this happens to you we sincerely apologize. Often your surgeon is busy in surgery and will not be able to speak with you directly at the time of your surgical cancellation if this does occur.

When do I follow up after surgery?

Your surgeon will give you instructions when to see them after surgery, and this is written down for you as part of your discharge home care.

How do I take care of my surgical site (e.g. bandages etc.)?

Your surgeon will give you instructions prior to leaving the hospital. Your nurse will review this information with you prior to going home.

What do I do if I have questions after surgery?

You can call your surgeon's office if you have questions after surgery.

If it is an emergency - please go to the emergency department. If possible, it is always best to go to the emergency department of the hospital where your surgery was performed so that your surgical team is available to see you if needed.

If you have questions or concerns regarding your anesthetic care you can contact the surgical bookings department or pre-admissions clinic through the hospital and ask to speak to your anesthesiologist.

Disclaimer:

We try very hard to keep the information in this leaflet accurate and up-to-date, but we cannot guarantee this. We don't expect this general information to cover all the questions you might have or to deal with everything that might be important to you. You should discuss your choices and any worries you have with your medical team, using this leaflet as a guide. This leaflet on its own should not be treated as advice. It cannot be used for any commercial or business purpose.