



# Preparing for Surgery

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*The Fruitful Hollow does not give medical advice. For any concerns specific to your own medical situation, procedure or treatment plan, please consult your doctor or FertilityCare Practitioner.*

## Included in this resource

So you've made the important decision to go ahead with surgery! This resource includes the following sections:

- ★ Pages 1-2: What to ask your surgeon - question list
- ★ Page 3: What to do in preparation for your surgery and recovery - checklist
- ★ Page 4: What to pack in your hospital bag - checklist
- ★ Pages 4-5: Spiritual considerations and preparations for surgery and recovery
- ★ Page 5: How to create your surgery and recovery "support team"
- ★ Pages 6-8: Duplicate copy of question list with space to write answers by hand
- ★ Page 8: Space to plan your "support team" - printable version

## What to ask your surgeon

These practical questions may be helpful when preparing for a consultation with your surgeon in advance of surgery, or in order to decide whether to schedule surgery. If you would like to print this list, see pages 6-8 for a version with added space to write answers.

### General

- How long is the waiting list for this procedure?
- What is the cost of this procedure?
- How will this operation impact my fertility?
- What kind of improvement can I expect to see on my charts/in my cycles as a result of this surgery?
- Is this a one-off procedure or is there a chance you would need to repeat the procedure in the future?

### On how to prepare for surgery

- I am currently taking the following prescription medications: \_\_\_\_\_. Do I need to stop taking them in advance of surgery? If so, when should I stop?
- How can I prepare my body for surgery?
- Is there a pre-operative assessment? What will be involved?
- Is there any testing I should have done before the operation?

### On what to expect of surgery day

- Will I be under general anesthetic?
- For how many hours before surgery should I fast?
- Is there a specific washing/disinfecting procedure I should carry out before surgery?
- Will I be allowed a visitor with me in the hospital?

### On the operation itself

- How long will the operation take?
- What procedures will be included in the surgery?
- What are the risks involved with this operation?
- What are the risks involved for me if I decide against this operation?
- What complications might arise?
- Are there scenarios where you would remove an organ? Am I giving consent for this by consenting to the surgery?
- Will my spouse/next of kin be contacted by the hospital when I regain consciousness?

### On discharge and recovery

- How long will I need to stay in hospital after the procedure? Will I stay overnight?
- Should I expect bleeding after surgery? How much bleeding is normal? How long is it normal for this to continue?
- What is a typical recovery timeline?
- What will my recovery protocol look like (ie. pain management, medications)?
- Will I have stitches that need to be removed by a doctor or will they dissolve?
- How long should I take off work?
- Are there any activities I should refrain from doing after surgery (eg. swimming, intercourse, strenuous exercise, carrying heavy things) and for how long?
- How long after surgery should I wait before it is safe to try to conceive?
- If I experience complications during my recovery after returning home, whom should I contact?

### If there is going to be post-operative treatment

- Will I receive my post-operative medications at the hospital or will I need to take my prescription to a pharmacy?
- What are some expected side effects of this treatment?
- If I experience severe side effects of this treatment, whom should I contact?

### On post-operative follow-up

- When will I find out the results of the procedure?
- Will you come to speak to me after the procedure to update me on how it went?
- Will I have a follow-up appointment with you in the days/weeks after surgery?
- Do you take photos and recordings during the operation? Will I see these afterwards and receive a copy?
- When will I receive a written report of the operation?

## What to do in preparation for your surgery and recovery

### Arrange

- Arrange sick leave with your employer.
- Consider requesting a family member or friend stay with you during the day for the initial days of your recovery.
- You may wish to speak to your priest and ask for a special blessing or, if he sees fit, the anointing of the sick.
- If you will be staying in hospital overnight and will not be allowed any visitors, you might like to ask your husband to write you a letter/card which you can open after your surgery to be reminded of his support.

### Prepare

- Take care of work and housekeeping tasks (projects, laundry, cleaning, errands) ahead of time so you don't have anything to attend to during your recovery.
- Consider making double batches of some meals so that you can freeze some portions to have on hand for you and your spouse during your recovery.

### Buy

- Stock up on a variety of food options for meals and snacks that will be easy to stomach.
- If you are having a laparoscopy, buy some peppermint tea, which will help to ease the gas pain.
- Buy or borrow a heating pad or hot water bottle to ease gas pain or cramps.
- Pick up some stool softeners in case you experience constipation after surgery.
- Pick up a pack of "thank you" notes and a few small gifts (eg. tea sachets, small bags of candy) to have on hand. People may offer to help you during your recovery and it's handy to have these items on hand to express your gratitude.
- Make sure you have some pyjamas which are loose and comfortable for your recovery time - if you are having a laparoscopy, you'll want something that doesn't rest on your incisions, such as a nightgown.

### Set up

- Set up a recovery basket next to your bed with anything you might need to hand. Useful items might include:
  - a notebook and pen for keeping track of what time you have taken medications,
  - easy distractions to pass the time (books, magazines, coloring books, laptop),
  - favorite snacks,
  - painkillers,
  - heating pad or hot water bottle,
  - compression stockings (these may be provided by the hospital upon discharge).

## What to pack in your hospital bag

### For the hospital stay

- Bathrobe/dressing gown and slippers for walking to the operating room
- Loose, comfortable underwear
- Sanitary pads
- Loose, comfortable clothing to come home in. If you are having a laparoscopy, bring clothing that will not rest on your incisions.
- List of who to contact in case of emergency (eg. spouse, parents, a Catholic priest)
- Book, magazine, coloring book or other distractions
- Rosary, Bible, holy cards or other devotional items
- Earphones
- Phone charger
- Water bottle with straw

### If you are staying in hospital overnight:

- Pyjamas/nightgown
- Eye mask and ear plugs in case of bright, noisy surroundings
- Wash bag (toothbrush, toothpaste, deodorant, hairbrush)
- Note from your husband (see "Arrange" checklist on previous page)

### Pack in the car for the journey home

- Soft pillow for holding over abdomen
- Sick bowl/basin
- Blanket

*It would be wise to remove all jewelry (including your wedding ring) before going to the hospital.*

## The spiritual side of surgery and recovery

Preparing for and recovering from surgery can be a time when we are spiritually and emotionally vulnerable. While you may have many logistics in mind as you prepare for your surgery, don't forget to nourish and strengthen your soul as well. It will help you to navigate the ups and downs of preparation, surgery and recovery from a more peaceful place and help keep you connected to Jesus, our ultimate Healer and Comforter. Below are some areas to consider. Some of these ideas may be part of your spiritual routine already, but some may be a new habit for this season.

### Prior to surgery

- Receive the sacrament of reconciliation (confession)
- Continue your daily prayer habits (scripture, petition and thanksgiving)

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- Consider attending adoration once a week for a few weeks prior to your surgery
- Request a blessing from your priest
- Ask for prayers from family and friends on your surgery day and for your recovery!

#### During recovery

- Choose a devotional or other spiritual reading book to read for a few minutes each day.
- Dedicate/offer up each day of your recovery for a different prayer intention for someone else. If you feel up to it, pray a rosary for that day's intention while you rest.
- Spend time in scripture. Pick a book of the Bible and read a paragraph or chapter each day. Consider Psalms or one of the Gospels if you are new to scripture reading, or perhaps the daily readings.
- If you are unable to attend mass in person in the days immediately following your surgery, contact your parish and see if you can request that someone bring you Communion.
- Pray a [morning offering](#) and [act of spiritual communion](#) daily.

## Creating your “surgery support team”

When facing surgery, it is important to have your “support team” in place. Determine who you want in your circle of support, what you need from them, and (here's the important bit!) communicate your needs with them. Friends and family may be unfamiliar with what your limitations will be during the recovery period and may not know how you want or need support during this time, so it's important to communicate clearly. If you would like to print your support team plan, see page 8 for a table to fill in by hand.

- Determine who you'd most like to have praying for you and checking up on you after your surgery. Let them know the date of your surgery and how they might best support you eg. “My surgery will be May 29th. I'm anxious and I know I may feel overwhelmed afterwards as well. Please could you pray for me and check in with me the day before and a few days afterwards?”
- Communicate your physical and emotional needs as well as your physical limitations during the recovery period with your spouse ahead of time. Don't expect them to read your mind! Eg. “I will need your assistance with cooking, cleaning, laundry and taking out the garbage during the 2 weeks post-surgery since movement will be challenging and I'm limited in how much I will be allowed to lift. I may be feeling emotionally overwhelmed afterwards and it would be really helpful to receive frequent hugs, reminders of your appreciation for me going through with the surgery and reassurance that we'll face current and next steps together.”
- Is there anything else you need? Meals? Someone to assist with chores at home? A visit? People around you may say “If there's anything you need, just let me know!” so make sure to take them up on their offer and clearly communicate what would be most helpful to you! Prepare a list of ideas and keep this on your phone, where you can easily refer to it or paste it into a message.

# Question and planning sheets to print

## What to ask your surgeon

### General

- How long is the waiting list for this procedure? \_\_\_\_\_
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### On how to prepare for surgery

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Do I need to stop taking them in advance of surgery? If so, when should I stop?  
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### On the operation itself

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- What are the risks involved with this operation?  
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- What are the risks involved for me if I decide against this operation?  
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- What complications might arise?  
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- Are there scenarios where you would remove an organ? Am I giving consent for this by consenting to the surgery?  
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On discharge and recovery

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- How long after surgery should I wait before it is safe to try to conceive?  
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On post-operative follow-up

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- When will I receive a written report of the operation?  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Creating your “surgery support team”

People I'd like on my support team	Types of support I need (including physical and emotional support)
Friends	
Family	
Spouse	I will need your help with:  Before/after surgery, I may be feeling:  During that time, supportive things you could say:  Supportive things you could do: