

# A guide for older people considering surgery

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## Purpose of this guide

This guide helps you (and your loved ones) talk with your healthcare team and decide about surgery. You may decide to have a surgery or you may decide it is not the best choice for you. There is no right or wrong answer.

Having surgery can be a big decision. Some older people feel tired and have trouble getting around. They may lose weight and have problems with their health. Choosing whether to have a surgery in this situation involves weighing up the possible benefits and risks for each person, including the choice to do nothing.

This guide sets out some of the things that your healthcare team might need to talk about with you. It is a good idea to think about these before your healthcare visit(s). You may also want to talk to your loved ones about them.

Using the guide, you can tick the questions that are most important to you. You can also write down any comments. You may ask a relative or friend to go through this guide with you. If any of the questions do not apply to you, just leave them blank. Everyone is different.

**Ask questions and please tell your doctors and the healthcare team what is important to you. There might be several people involved in your care and they all need to know what is important to you. Please share your views with all members of your healthcare team. That may include your GP, geriatrician, anaesthetist, nurse, emergency doctor, surgeon and others.**

## Getting ready for a healthcare visit

Before your **healthcare visit** collect your health information in one place. This may include:

- a summary from your doctor
- a summary of past hospital visits and any discharge summaries
- specialists' letters
- a list of your medicines
- list of allergies
- care plans if you become very unwell
- Medicare and health insurance details.

Some people find it helpful to put all of these into a folder and take that to their appointments.

**What surgery are you thinking about? Write down what type of surgery you might be having and why you might need it.**

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## What are the most important questions to talk about?

Tick the questions that matter most to you and write down any comments.

### Questions about your health and healthcare

Question		Your notes
<input type="checkbox"/>	What do you know about your health problem that might need surgery? What other health problems do you have?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are any of these health problems stopping you from doing the things you like? If so, how?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Overall, are there things your healthcare team have asked you to do, that you find <u>unhelpful</u> ? Do they cause you trouble or stress? What are they? (e.g. medicines, tests, diet, exercises or other)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Overall, are there things your healthcare team have asked you to do, that you find <u>helpful</u> ? Do they improve your health and wellbeing? What are they? (For example, medicines, tests, diet, exercises or other)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	What has happened to you recently with your healthcare? Have decisions been made about your health that you are not happy with?	

### Questions about your life and what matters to you

Question		Your notes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is there someone that you would like to help support you in deciding about surgery? Who would that be?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	What are your days like when you are not at healthcare visits?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Where do you find the most joy or happiness in your life?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	What worries you most about your future?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	What is important to you? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Having less pain</li> <li>○ Being more mobile</li> </ul>	

Question	Your notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Living longer</li> <li>○ Keeping your brain function</li> <li>○ Quality of life</li> <li>○ Living independently</li> <li>○ Your culture, traditions and spiritual beliefs</li> <li>○ Finances</li> <li>○ Family and friends</li> <li>○ Other things</li> </ul>	

### Questions about the surgery

Question	Your notes
What questions do you have? (For example, What would a surgery involve? What is going to change for the better for me after the surgery? What could go wrong?)	
What health benefits are you hoping the surgery will give you?	
What would you like to know about other treatment options if you don't have the surgery?	
What kind of treatment do you want to avoid? (For example, if there is a problem after the surgery)	
Are you afraid of or worried about anything?	
What support would you have at home if you have a surgery? Who would care for you?	

Thank you for taking the time to think about these things. At your healthcare visit, we will help you learn about your options and weigh up the benefits and risks. We will talk about your life and what matters most to you and decide together about your surgery.

We are here to support you.