



Southern NSW
Local Health District

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR SURGERY JOURNEY



Important information
for you, your family
and carers





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Aboriginal artwork, Artist: Alison Simpson

In the true spirit of Reconciliation and through embracing the values of collaboration, openness, respect and empowerment, Southern NSW Local Health District acknowledges and pays respect to the traditional custodians of the land; the Gundungurra, Ngarigo, Ngannawal and Yuin peoples.

We share and celebrate the rich history of the Aboriginal culture and recognise the diverse and proud Aboriginal nations across our District.

Southern NSW Local Health District acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, community members and staff for their ongoing contribution to society and their commitment to improving the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Getting the most from your surgery journey



This booklet is a guide to your pre and post surgery journey.

It will help you by

- **providing you with information to help your preparation prior to coming to hospital, during your stay and what may happen when you return home**
- **providing sample questions you may like to ask your healthcare professional**
- **providing a suggested list of what to bring with you**
- **providing guidance as to what happens on the day of surgery**

Please make sure you tell us about the type of medicines you take, any medical conditions you have and who your GP is.



Putting your care first



Your care is our most important concern.

We will work with you and your support person to make sure the care we provide is respectful of the things that matter to you.

Prior to coming to hospital, if you have questions about any aspect of your stay, we encourage you or your support person to speak with either your referring doctor or the staff in our admissions office.

During your stay in hospital, if you have any questions, please speak with staff caring for you or the Nurse Unit Manager of the ward.

Our goal is to consider your views, needs, values and preferences in planning your care and hospital experience.

Who will care for you?

Whilst in hospital doctors, nursing, allied health and pharmacy professionals will coordinate care with you. Beyond the hospital other medical professionals will assist in your care. This includes your GP.



Suggested questions to ask your doctor/specialist

Medical tests

What is this test for?

Is this the only way to find out what is wrong?

How is the test done?

What do I need to do to prepare for the test?

How long do the results take to come through?

Who do I contact for the results?

Surgery

What are the risks for this procedure or surgery?

What happens if I choose to delay or not have the surgery?

Where is the best place for me to have this surgery?

What is the cost?

Will I need help at home after surgery?

How soon do I need to make a decision about the surgery?

For more information go to
www.health.nsw.gov.au/Hospitals/Going_To_hospital/Pages/default.aspx

Suggested questions for the specialist or pre admission clinic

What does this surgery do?

What time should I stop eating/drinking on the day of my surgery?

What time should I be at the hospital on the day of my surgery?

Should I take medications on the day of surgery?

I have pre existing conditions, is there any special preparation prior to surgery?

Will I need an anaesthetic? What type?

Are there any side effects?

What will happen after surgery?

How long will I be in hospital?

How long will it take me to recover?

Will I need professional follow up after the surgery?

Notes

Nil by mouth or fasting is common before general anaesthesia. Fasting means no food or drink. Your specialist or pre-admission clinic will tell you when you need to stop eating or drinking.

If you need surgery, we need to talk...



Please help us by answering your phone in the days before your surgery. When we call the number may appear as No Caller ID.



You may also receive a letter asking you to call us about your surgery. Please read this letter. It will provide instructions on what you need to do prior to coming to hospital.

If your contact details change, please let us know.



You may need to get ready for surgery by coming to one of our Pre-Admission Clinics. The clinic will help you plan your care during your stay with us and after your surgery. We will let you know if this is the case.

What should I do if I'm feeling unwell just before my surgery?

If you are unwell within three days before your surgery you will need to call the hospital or contact your GP for advice.

If you are too unwell for surgery, it may be postponed until you are feeling better and it is safer for you to have an anaesthetic.

Please call us **immediately** if you have any of the following in the three days before your surgery

- Have COVID-19 or are a household or close contact of a person with COVID-19.
- Temperature or fever- feeling hot or cold
- Sore throat
- Rash
- Feel unwell
- A cut, break or tear in your skin
- Toothache or infection
- Any infected wounds
- Diarrhoea or vomiting
- A recent unplanned visit to the Emergency Department or local doctor



Please let us know as soon as possible if

- you are unable to attend the hospital due to work or family commitments
- you have realised you are pregnant since seeing your specialist
- you have developed a new medical problem we are not aware of
- you don't have anyone to take you home after the surgery
- you don't have anyone to stay with you after the surgery
- you have had surgery since seeing the surgeon
- you have had your surgery elsewhere
- you have changed your mind about the surgery – please ring the Hospital where your surgery is planned and ask to speak to the Admissions Officer or the Theatre Nurse Unit Manager
- you have any concerns about your surgery

Keeping fit before your surgery



Keeping fit and strong as possible before your surgery, will help the surgery and recovery. Active people have less risk of problems during surgery.

If you are in hospital in the lead up to your surgery, ask to see a physiotherapy for suitable exercises during your stay.

Ask your doctor / surgeon about the best exercises to do prior to your surgery.

Smoking



All hospitals and hospital grounds are smoke free.

To avoid complications with your surgery, you should not smoke for at least 60 days prior to your surgery. You can call the NSW Quitline on 137848 or go to the iCanQuit website. Think about quitting at least 60 days before your surgery.

You will need to stop smoking 24 hours before your surgery, otherwise your anaesthetist may cancel your surgery.

What to bring to hospital*



- current labelled medications (these will be returned to you when you go home)
- comfortable day clothing – if you are having leg or hand/arm surgery, wear loose clothing that can be put over a bandage
- glasses, hearing aids and walking aids
- any letters from your GP
- relevant X-rays and scans
- Medicare card
- private hospital fund card, veterans affairs card, workers compensation, public liability or third party case information (if applicable)

For overnight stays please also bring the items listed below:

- pyjamas/nighties, dressing gown and slippers (non-slip sole)
- toiletries (soap, shampoo/conditioner, toothpaste, toothbrush, hairbrush/comb, razor)
- small amount of money (for newspapers, etc.)

It is recommended that non-essential jewellery be left at home.

** Please Note: Our hospitals cannot accept responsibility for your valuable possessions if they are lost or stolen. For your own protection please leave them at home. If you must bring them with you, ensure they remain in the keeping of a trusted person at all times. Alternatively, you may have some valuables locked in the hospital safe – please see ward staff for more information.*

What will happen while I wait?

When you arrive at hospital, please go to the pre admission reception area. You may be asked to sit in the waiting room until it is time to have your operation.

People are seen according to their place on the operating list. Emergencies can happen, so if there is an emergency, you may have to wait for a longer period.

Your support person is welcome to stay in the waiting room with you. In some circumstances, your support person may be able to accompany you into the operating room. Please discuss this with staff.

A nurse and/or a doctor will ask you questions. You may be asked the same questions several times. This is for your safety.

During your stay

You will have regular meetings with doctors, nurses and allied health staff about your care.



At these meetings you and your support person will be involved in discussing your treatment. Please ask questions at any time.

Bedside handover

Bedside handover happens when your health professionals transfers information and responsibility to other health care professionals.

Health professionals will include you in the handover conversation.

Health professionals will:

- discuss your care and treatment with you
- check your medical charts and records
- check any equipment and monitors
- check your identification and allergies
- check your dressings and/or tubes

This is your opportunity to ask questions, so you can be fully informed about your care and treatment.



What happens after my operation?

You will be able to leave the hospital once you have recovered from your operation, received your medications to take home and your support person has arrived to take you home. This is usually between two – six hours after your operation, depending on your physical recovery.

Please make sure you have a responsible adult to take you home and stay with you for 24 hours after your surgery.

If this is not possible, please talk with your doctor or the admission's officer before surgery. It is important to ensure you are safe after surgery.

If you are staying overnight or longer, you will be taken to a hospital ward. We will tell you which ward on the day of your operation.

Your support person will be provided with a number to call after your operation.

What happens when I go home?



Before you go home, a nurse will help discuss the important information in the table on the next page.

If you had a day procedure, a nurse from the preoperative service may telephone you the next day to check how you are doing.

What kind of pain will I feel after surgery?

You might experience muscular, throat, and/or movement pain after your surgery.

Please let us know, we can help.

Discomfort related to the surgery is normal, you need to rest and stop any activity that causes pain.

What do I do about?	You should...
Pain	Follow the steps on the written discharge instructions. Make sure you talk with your doctor about the pain medication prescribed. If you have a script please organise to have this filled. If the pain relief medication does not work contact your G.P. or the hospital where you had your surgery. Be aware that some pain medicine can make you constipated.
Wounds and dressings	Follow the instructions given to you by your nurse/healthcare professional.
Toilet	If you don't urinate and become uncomfortable, contact Health Direct on 1800 022 222 or your nearest hospital. If you experience constipation talk to your GP or chemist for advice.
Problems such as bleeding, high temperature, moderate to severe pain	Contact call Health Direct on 1800 022 222 or nearest hospital
Follow up appointment(s)	Talk to the nurse who is coordinating your discharge from hospital before you leave. If you have any questions contact your hospital or your specialist/surgeon.
If you have any questions	Contact your hospital or surgeon/specialist

What if something goes wrong after surgery?

Please go to the emergency department or dial 000 if you have

- Uncontrollable bleeding
- Chest pain or chest tightness
- Difficulty breathing
- A change in alertness or your support person is unable to walk you up or your support person is unable to wake you up
- Sudden onset of weakness, numbness or paralysis of the face, arm or leg
- Sudden collapse or unexplained fall
- Unexplained fitting in adults
- Blood that appears when vomiting, coughing or with bowel movements
- Slowly increasing pain not controlled with your usual medicine
- Increasing swelling around the surgery area
- A bad smell or pus coming from the wound or broken stitches or the wound opens up
- Feeling hot or cold, or having a fever
- Constipation or trouble with bowel movements
- Anything that is worrying you or your family after surgery

DO NOT DRIVE YOURSELF TO THE EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT

HealthDirect AUSTRALIA - 1800 022 222

This is a 24-hour telephone health advice line staffed by registered nurses, providing expert advice on any health issue and what to do next.

HealthDirect Australia can be used when:

- someone is sick and you're not sure what to do
- you want expert advice about a health issue and what to do next
- you need to know where to find after-hours health services or pharmacies

Our surgical hospitals – contact details



Batemans Bay Hospital

7 Pacific Street, Batemans Bay

PH: 4475 1500

Email: SNSWLHD-

EurobodallaSurgicalWaitlist@health.nsw.gov.au



South East Regional Hospital

4 Virginia Drive, Bega

PH: 6491 9999

Email: SNSWLHD-

SERHWaitlist@health.nsw.gov.au



Goulburn Base Hospital

130 Goldsmith Street, Goulburn

PH: 4827 3111

Email: SNSWLHD-Goulburn-

SurgicalBookings@health.nsw.gov.au



Cooma Hospital and Health Service

Bent Street, Cooma

PH: 6455 3222

Email: SNSWLHD-Cooma-

Waitlist@health.nsw.gov.au



Moruya Hospital and Health Service

2-10 River Street, Moruya

PH: 4474 2666

Email: SNSWLHD-

EurobodallaSurgicalWaitlist@health.nsw.gov.au



Queanbeyan Hospital and Health Service

Collett Street, Queanbeyan

PH: 6150 7000

Email: SNSWLHD-Queanbeyan-

SurgicalBookings@health.nsw.gov.au

For more information about our surgical services go to
www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/nsw-health/snswlhd/our-services/surgical-services

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR SURGERY JOURNEY

Useful information

HealthDirect - 24 hour GP helpline 1800 022 222

Interpreter Service
4223 8540 or 1800 247 272

Ambulance NSW 000

Surgery Access Line 1800 053 456

SNSWLHD-ConsumerFeedback@health.nsw.gov.au

Southern NSW Local Health District
www.nsw.gov.au/snswlhd/our-services/surgical-services



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