

## Outpatient Surgery

If you need surgery, you will have either **inpatient surgery** or **outpatient surgery**.

### How Are Inpatient and Outpatient Surgery Different?

If your problem is complicated, your doctor might suggest that you have inpatient surgery. Your doctor might also suggest inpatient surgery if the operation is complicated. Having inpatient surgery means that you will stay in the hospital overnight (or longer) after your operation.

If your problem is less complicated, your doctor might suggest that you have outpatient surgery. Having outpatient surgery means that you will go home shortly after your operation. Often, this means that you will be able to go home the same day. In some cases, you will go home early the next morning.

Outpatient surgery is done for many reasons. For example, your doctor might suggest outpatient surgery if you

- Have a cataract or a hernia
- Need a tube placed in your ear
- Have stones in your gallbladder
- Have a lump in your breast or a problem with your uterus
- Have a problem with your joints or muscles

### What Complications Might I Have With Outpatient Surgery?

Most people who have outpatient operations do not have complications. But complications are possible. For example, you might have an infection or bleeding. The complications you might have will depend on what operation you had. The complications might also depend on any health problems you have.

If you have a serious complication, you might have to stay in the hospital. You also might need another operation. However, serious complications are rare.

Less serious complications are usually minor. This means they go away quickly without needing much more care. Less serious complications are also uncommon.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality  
[www.ahrq.com](http://www.ahrq.com)

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### What Should I Ask Before Having Outpatient Surgery?

It will help if you learn more about the operation your doctor has suggested. By learning more, you can be a part of your care before and after surgery.

To learn more, you should ask

- What operation has my doctor suggested?
- Why has my doctor suggested this operation?
- How might this operation help me?
- What will happen to me if I don't have the operation?
- How many times has the surgeon done this operation?
- What complications might I have?
- During the operation, how will my pain be treated?
- After the operation, how will pain be treated?
- After the operation, will I need physical therapy or other help?

On the day of your operation, another family member or friend should be available to pick you up. He or she can help you get home after your operation. He or she can also help you understand the instructions you will get from your doctor or nurse. These instructions will tell you what to watch for after you go home.

### What Should I Watch for After I Go Home?

Most people who have outpatient operations do not have complications. But quickly taking care of a small complication can keep it from getting worse.

Before you go home, you should ask

- What signs or symptoms of complications should I watch for?
- What should I do if I think I have a complication?
- When should I see the doctor again?
- What number should I call if I have a question before I see the doctor again?

After you go home, you should tell your doctor if you

- See any bleeding
- Have a fever (temperature above 101.5 degrees, taken by mouth)
- Have problems urinating
- Are throwing up
- Have serious pain

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**Sources:** Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality

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