

Getting Ready for Surgery

Each year, over 15 million people have some kind of surgery. Most of these surgeries are not emergencies, allowing time to learn as much as possible about an operation.

Research shows that patients who are well informed about their treatment are more satisfied with the results. Here are some questions to ask:

- Why do I need an operation?
- What operation are you recommending?
 - Is there more than one way of doing the surgery, as some operations are more extensive than others?
 - Why is your surgeon recommending doing the surgery one way over another?
- Are there alternatives to surgery?
 - Medicines or treatments other than surgery, such as special exercises, might help you just as well—what are the benefits and risks of other choices
 - Watchful waiting may be a choice—ask about the risks and benefits
- How much will the operation cost?
 - Your costs will be lower by using PPO doctors and hospitals
 - Hospital stays require precertification, so ask your doctor to call APWU Health plan to precertify
- What are the benefits of having the operation?
 - Ask your surgeon what you will gain and how long the benefits will last. By having a realistic understanding of benefits, you are less likely to be disappointed with the results
- What are the risks of having the operation?
 - All surgery has some risk. Ask about typical complications that could occur, such as infection or reaction to anesthesia, possible side effects
- What if I don't have this operation?
 - Ask what you'll gain or lose by not having the operation
- Where can I get a second opinion?
 - You can ask your primary care physician for the name of another surgeon for a second opinion to make sure this is the right choice for you. APWU Health Plan covers second opinions.

Source: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)