



Preparing for your operation – a checklist



This is a checklist you might like to print out and use in the lead-up time to your operation

Preparing yourself for your operation

- ☒ **Lose excess weight.** If you're overweight, you can be at risk of more complications during your operation than someone who isn't overweight.
- ☒ **Keep active.** Stay as physically active as you can (as much as your condition lets you).
- ☒ **Stop smoking.** Smoking can cause complications, affect your breathing and delay recovery, so this is really important for your health.
- ☒ **Visit your dentist (if you're having heart valve surgery).** It's important that your gums and teeth are as healthy as possible to reduce the risk of infection.

If you need help with any of these areas, talk to your doctor, pharmacist, dietitian or dentist who can help support you. You might also want to join a local support group who can help you during this time.

Travel arrangements

- ☒ Arrange for a family member or friend to take you to hospital and pick you up.
- ☒ Some hospitals charge for car parking so take some change with you.

What to take into hospital

- ☒ **Pyjamas or a nightdress that buttons up the front.** After the operation you won't be able to lift your arms above your head, so button-up clothes will be easier for you to put on.
- ☒ **Front fastening bras.** If you're a woman, you might find it more comfortable to take bras that fasten at the front.
- ☒ **Loose fitting clothes.** You'll want to be as comfortable as possible. Tracksuit bottoms are a good idea and tops that have buttons down the front or zip up.
- ☒ **Slippers and/or comfy socks.** Slippers or slipper socks will help keep you comfortable.
- ☒ **Things to help pass the time.** Light reading is a good idea; for example, audio books, magazines or novels.
- ☒ **Hair bands and grips to tie your hair back.** Tying long hair back is more hygienic and will be more comfortable for you.

Planning ahead for when you get home

Think ahead to what you may need to put in place in your home so that when you come out of hospital, everything is set up for you as you need it.

- Make up a batch of meals to put in your freezer to cover your first week.
- Have a selection of healthy snacks available that you don't need to prepare; for example, carrot batons and apples.
- Make sure you've got a stool to put your feet on when you're sitting down and an armchair that you can comfortably get in and out of.
- Put fresh sheets on your bed so they are ready for when you get home.
- Consider borrowing a raised toilet seat (from the British Red Cross). Most toilet seats are quite low so will be difficult to get up from. A raised seat will help.
- Clean the house before you go into hospital so it's clean and tidy to come home to.
- Arrange to have in some essential groceries such as milk and bread.

Other things to think about

- Pet care. Arrange for a relative, friend or neighbour to walk and feed your dog or feed your cat (if you have one).
- Do you have someone who can pick up post-op prescriptions for you?
- You won't be able to drive yourself straightaway – have you got a friend or relative who can either pick things up for you or take you to the shops?
- You won't be able to lift anything heavier than a kettle that's half full for up to eight weeks. It's a good idea to plan ahead for help with lifting.

Useful contact numbers:

Hospital _____ Other _____