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Questions about surgery

About the surgery

1. What is the exact name of the surgery and how is it done? Write down the name if you don't think you will remember it.
2. Why do you need the surgery?
3. Will you be able to go home the same day of the surgery (outpatient surgery)? If so, will you need to have someone take you home after the surgery?
4. Does the surgery require an overnight stay in the hospital (inpatient surgery)? If so, how long will you be in the hospital?
5. What will you need to do to prepare for the surgery?
6. What are the risks and benefits?
 - How often is this surgery successful? What does a successful outcome mean?
 - What can you do to improve the likelihood of success (such as changing your diet or beginning certain exercises)?
 - What is the risk of death or disability?
 - What is the next step if the surgery fails?
 - What is the likelihood that your problem will return after surgery?

7. What kind of anesthesia will be used (local, regional, or general)?
8. How long will the procedure take?
9. What is the cost of the surgery? Is it likely to be covered by medical insurance?

About your choices

1. Consider your preferences for treatment. If you are not sure what treatment is best for you, get a second opinion.
2. Have you considered all your options? Are there any nonsurgical options to consider?
3. How critical is the timing of the surgery? Is there any flexibility in when it is scheduled? Be prepared to discuss your scheduling preferences.

About your surgeon

1. What is the surgeon's experience with this procedure? How many procedures has he or she done per year? What is his or her success rate?
2. Does the surgeon have board certification in this area?
3. Will another doctor be assisting your surgeon?
4. Will the surgeon be using a new instrument or piece of equipment during the procedure? Has the surgeon been fully trained in the use of the instrument or equipment?
5. Who will be giving the anesthesia? Discuss the anesthesia options with your surgeon ahead of time.
6. Will anyone be in the operating room other than the doctors and nurses needed to perform the surgery (such as a person involved in training the surgeon on a new piece of equipment)?

About your recovery

1. What should you expect during the recovery period? What is normal?
2. What kinds of self-care could you be doing to help your recovery?
3. Will your activities be limited during the recovery period? If so, which activities and for how long?
4. What help might you need while you recover?
5. What symptoms should you call your doctor about?

Partnering with your doctor

1. Tell your doctor your preferences for treatment. Are there other options you would like to consider other than surgery?

2. Discuss your biggest concerns about the surgery.
3. Tell your doctor the results you expect to get from the surgery. What outcome would you consider to be a success? What would you consider a failure?