Before and After Hospital Admission for Surgery

Dartmouth General Hospital
Welcome.
This pamphlet will give you some information about your care before and after surgery. We hope you will find it helpful.

What is the Pre-Admission Clinic?
The Pre-Admission Clinic provides out-patient services before your admission to hospital. This will allow you to remain at home until the day of your surgery. At the Clinic, staff will meet with you to help plan your hospital stay.
The purpose of the Pre-Admission Clinic is to:

- Provide all necessary information about your visit before the day of your surgery.
- Begin the planning process for nursing care and other services that you will need, such as food and nutrition, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, pastoral care, and anesthesia.
- Teach you about your care before and after your surgery.
- Begin discharge planning and find what services you may need when you go home.
Your visit will include:
1. Registration at the Clinic.
2. An interview with a nurse.
3. Pre-operative teaching.
4. Post-operative teaching.
5. Anesthesia assessment (if needed).
6. Blood work and tests (if needed).
7. Discharge planning.
8. Other interviews as needed.

Your visit will last from 2 to 4 hours.

What you should bring:

- All medications that you are currently taking in their original containers, including all over-the-counter and herbal medications.
- Any medications that you would usually take at home during the time you will be at the Clinic.
- Provincial Health Card.
- Private insurance card (if you have one).
- Personal Directive or “living will” (if you have one).
- Items that may help you pass the time, such as a book or a small craft.
- You may wish to bring a family member or friend with you. This person could be someone who will be at home with you after your surgery, or someone who will help with your care.
Inquiries:
Booking Office: 902-465-8526
Pre-Admission Clinic: 902-460-4502
*If for any reason you are unable to keep your appointments for testing, please call.*

Getting ready for surgery

Consent for surgery
Before you can have surgery, you must sign a consent form giving the doctor permission to do the procedure. If you have any questions, they must be answered by the doctor before you sign the form.

To sign a consent form you must be of legal age (19 years). If you are under 19 years of age, talk to your doctor about the signing of the consent.

Health and hygiene
• Call your surgeon before coming to the hospital if you have a fever, cold, or flu-like symptoms.
• Dartmouth General is a scent-free environment. Do not use scented products.
• A good night’s rest before surgery is important.
• Take a complete bath or shower and shampoo your hair the evening before or the morning of your surgery.
• We will give you instructions about skin preparation if needed.
Medications
Follow the instructions your doctor gave you about taking your medications.

Please bring all of your medications to the hospital with you in their original containers. Tell the nurse that you have your medications with you.

Let your surgeon know if you are taking over-the-counter medications like Aspirin® (ASA) or herbal medications. It is very important to notify your surgeon at least one week before your surgery if you are taking Aspirin® (ASA) or blood thinners. These medications may need to be stopped before your surgery.

If you have any allergies to medications and you do not know their name(s), check with your pharmacy or doctor.

Smoking
Do not smoke after your evening meal the night before your surgery. Smoking can cause more secretions in your lungs and you could have problems breathing.

Dartmouth General Hospital is smoke-free. This includes electronic cigarettes.

Ask your doctor or nurse about our Smoking Cessation Program.
If you are having a general anesthetic:

DO NOT eat any food or drink any liquids, including water, after midnight the night before your surgery, unless otherwise directed. Do not eat candy or chew gum after midnight the night before your surgery.

Do not drink alcohol for 48 hours before your surgery.

Delays
Delays in the operating room (OR) may cause a change in your scheduled surgery time.

There is a chance that your surgery could be cancelled because of an emergency. If this should happen, we will try to give you a new date before you leave. If a new date is not available, the surgeon’s office will call you to reschedule.

Dentures
Wear your dentures to the hospital. Just before you go to the OR, your dentures will be removed and placed in a denture cup. If you have permanent bridges, caps, crowns, or loose teeth, please tell your nurse.
Glasses or contact lenses
Bring a case to store your glasses in when they are not being used. Your glasses will be taken from you just before you go to the OR. They will be returned to you on your nursing unit.
If you normally wear contact lenses, it is best if you wear glasses instead. If this is not possible, bring your lens container and cleaning solutions. Remember to tell your nurse that you are wearing contact lenses. They must be removed before you go to the OR.

Hearing aids
If you wear a hearing aid, bring it and a storage container with you.

Personal care items
Please bring a dressing gown, pyjamas, slippers, mouthwash, toothpaste, toothbrush, comb, and other personal grooming items you may need for the first day or two after surgery.
Other items may be brought to the hospital as they are needed.
If you are menstruating on the day of your surgery, please use a sanitary napkin (pad) rather than a tampon for safety reasons.
Valuables
Leave all valuables (for example, jewelry, money, credit cards, cheque books) at home. The hospital is not responsible for the loss of any item. All jewelry, including toe rings, must be removed before your surgery. Any item used to pierce ANY body part must be removed. This is for your safety.

Day Surgery Unit
Please arrive 2 hours before your surgery unless told otherwise by your surgeon.

Report to the Day Surgery Unit.

• You will be prepared for the OR in this area. You will be asked to put on a johnny shirt, dressing gown, and slippers.
• Your clothes and other belongings will be marked with your name and taken to your room.
• You will wait in this area before going to the OR.
Surgery

The operating room (OR)

- An OR nurse will greet you and ask you several questions. This is done to meet patient safety standards.
- The OR is usually cool. You will be given a warm blanket.
- A staff member will help you move to an OR bed.
- Before you go to sleep, you will have an intravenous (IV) started.
- Depending on the procedure, a large pad may be placed on your leg, back, or shoulder. This is a grounding pad and is used for safety.
- A clothes pin-like device, called an Oximeter Probe, may be attached to your finger. This will help the anesthetist measure your oxygen levels during surgery.
- Your surgeon and anesthetist will talk with you before your anesthesia.

Waiting room

A waiting area is provided for relatives/friends while you are in surgery and recovery.
After surgery

Recovery area
You will wake up in the Post Anesthetic Care Unit. Most patients recover from their anesthetic in this area.

The nurses will be waiting for you. They will frequently check your:

• Blood pressure and pulse.
• Breathing and potential need for oxygen.
• Intravenous (IV).
• Dressings and drainage tubes.

They will also assess your level of discomfort and give you medications as needed. You may be asked to rate your pain on a scale of 0-10. This assessment will continue when you are on the nursing unit.

The skin around where you had your surgery may be pink. This is normal. It is caused by a cleansing solution used in the OR to make sure that your skin is clean before surgery.

When you are more awake and comfortable, you will be taken to your nursing unit.
Nursing unit
On your unit, the nurses will continue to check you. You will have a call bell placed beside you to summon the nurse, if needed.

Pain control
The nurses will make you as comfortable as possible. Pain medication will be available. Please do not wait until you are in severe pain before asking your nurse for pain medication. You will heal better if you are comfortable.

Deep breathing and coughing exercises
You will be expected to do the deep breathing and coughing exercises that you practiced at home.
1. Take a deep breath in through your nose.
2. Hold your breath for 2-3 seconds, by counting 1, 2, 3.
3. Blow it out through your mouth.
4. Repeat this type of breathing in and out 6 or 7 times.
5. On your last breath in, hold it for a second and firmly cough. If you cough up any phlegm, repeat the exercise.
These exercises help keep your lungs clear and make your breathing easier. The best time to do these exercises is about 20 minutes after you receive your pain medication.

When doing these exercises, hold a pillow over any abdominal incisions. This will help support your incisions and ease any discomfort.

The nurse on your unit will tell you how often to do these exercises.

**Feet and leg exercises**

Exercising your feet and legs helps your blood circulate better.

1. Point your toes downward towards the floor, relax your feet, and then point your toes upward towards the ceiling. Relax.

2. Make circles with both ankles going to the right. Repeat the same going to the left. Relax.

3. Bend your knees up and down.

**These exercises should not be done if your surgeon says not to.**

It is not wise to stay in bed for long periods of time without moving your legs and feet. These exercises should be done at least 5 times every hour. Your nurse can give you more help or information if needed.
Activity after surgery
It is important to remain as active as possible. You may have discomfort, but do not let it stop you from doing some things for yourself. The length of time that you need to be in bed will vary depending on your type of surgery.
You will be helped out of bed the first couple of times and then as needed.

Nutrition
At first, you will have an IV. When you are able to tolerate fluids and food, they will be added to your diet as ordered by your surgeon.

Passing urine
When you return to your room, your nurse will ask you to try to pass urine (pee). A catheter may be used to drain your bladder if you have discomfort or difficulty passing urine. It will be removed when you no longer need it.

Bowel movements
There may be a change in your bowel habits.
Your surgeon may start you on a laxative or stool softener because pain medication can cause constipation.
Specific instructions
The nurses will talk about your type of surgery and the routines of your surgeon with you, as applicable. Specific instructions for your surgery will be provided to you before discharge.

Going home
Bring comfortable clothing and comfortable shoes to wear home.
Make plans to have someone take you home when you are discharged.
Also, arrange to have someone at home with you for at least a day after your surgery.
If you have small children, arrange for someone to help care for them for a few days if needed.
Please use the space on the back to write down any questions you have.

If you have any questions, please ask.
We are here to help you.