

Diabetes and Surgery

The prospect of surgery can make anyone feel worried and fearful. However, careful planning, especially for people with diabetes, can help you make your operation as safe as possible and your recovery period less stressful.

The key is to start planning well before your surgery date. This “to do” list can help you cover all the bases before your operation.

1. Meet with your primary care doctor or endocrinologist.

Work with your doctor to develop a plan for getting your blood sugar in the best possible control several weeks before you have surgery. Having good control of your blood sugar will lessen the chance of high blood sugar (hyperglycemia) or low blood sugar (hypoglycemia) reactions during your operation. Good blood sugar control also makes infections less likely and promotes healing.

Your doctor may also want to do a complete medical history and physical examination and other tests before your surgery.

2. Talk to your anesthesiologist.

This is the doctor who is responsible for monitoring your diabetes while your surgeon is performing the operation. Tell the anesthesiologist about your medical history, including details about your diabetes. Be sure to

include your current medication regimen and any diabetes-related complications you have.

You may also want to discuss different types of anesthesia. Some procedures can be done with local or spinal anesthesia, allowing you to remain awake during the procedure. In such cases, recovery time is often shorter.

Other procedures require general anesthesia, which puts you to sleep during your operation. More careful monitoring of your diabetes is required during the procedure and after you undergo general anesthesia.

3. Schedule your surgery for the early morning.

Try to get the first morning time slot in the operating room. There will be less of a chance for high or low blood sugar reactions while you are waiting for your operation and are unable to eat.

4. Talk to your doctor in advance about how you will manage your diabetes immediately after your operation.

After surgery, you may need to adjust your medication or insulin doses based on your blood sugar level. Ask your doctor how you should manage your diabetes so that you can prepare in advance.

5. Get a temporary disabled parking permit, if necessary.

If you are having orthopedic sur-

gery or another operation that will make it hard for you to walk during recovery, go to your local Department of Motor Vehicles and request the appropriate paperwork. Ask your doctor to sign it in advance so that you can get your temporary permit before your operation.

6. Fill any new prescriptions before your surgery.

Ask your doctor and surgeon whether you will need any pain medication or other prescriptions after your operation. These may include antinausea pills, laxatives, or other drugs. Ask for the prescriptions in advance, so you can have the medications ready when you need them.

7. Find out how long you will need to recover.

If you will not be eating for an extended period of time, you and your doctor will need to change your diabetes care regimen. Also, you may need to make arrangements with your workplace for an extended recovery time.