

Safe Surgery for Frail Patients

Frailty is the accumulation of deficits over time resulting in a decreased resiliency and increased susceptibility to complications related to health. Your surgical team has determined that you are showing signs of increased frailty.

This means the risks of surgery are higher for you than someone without frailty. This guide provides an outline to safe surgery for patients who are or are becoming frail.

Before your surgery (Preop) For Frail Patients

- 1. Identify your support system:** Talk to your family and friends about your procedure and what kind of assistance you may need before and after.
- 2. Identify your goals:** Discuss your goals for your health, your surgery and your overall life goals with friends, family and your medical team. Discuss any impacts surgery may have in achieving these goals.
- 3. Write your wishes down:** Create an advanced directive that includes your current wishes or review one that you had created previously. Be sure your chart is updated with a current copy before you go in for surgery.
- 4. Take Control of your medical conditions:** Talk to your providers about what steps you can take to ensure you are best treating any chronic medical problems before surgery.
- 5. Pay attention to your nutrition:** Make sure you are getting enough protein, vitamins and minerals each day prior to surgery. Talk to your healthcare team if you are having difficulty so they can connect you to resources if this is difficult
- 6. Get moving:** If you exercise regularly, keep up your routine. If you are not regularly active, talk to your healthcare team about safe ways to increase your activity.

After your surgery (Post-op) For Frail Patients

1. Waking up from anesthesia: The medicine given to keep you comfortable during surgery may cause you to be confused or disoriented when you wake up. Your support people and care team will support you if this occurs to keep you comfortable and safe.

2. Tubes and lines: To make sure you are recovering appropriately and to keep you safe you may have a variety of lines and tubes after surgery. As you recover, the number of tubes and lines will decrease. It is important that you do not pull or remove any of these devices.

3. Getting out of bed: You should only get out of bed with help from your healthcare team after surgery until it is determined that you are safe to get up alone. Do not get out of bed without help until your nurse tells you that this is ok.

4. Going to the bathroom: You may have tubes to drain your bladder after surgery. If you feel like you need to urinate, let your healthcare team know so they can assist you to do this safely.

5. Pain: After surgery you will likely have some pain and discomfort. Talk with your doctors and nurses about how you are feeling and what options are available to make you more comfortable. You do not need to suffer after surgery! While some pain is expected, your care team will do everything possible to make sure this is as little as possible and at a level you are able to tolerate.

6. Sleep: Sleep is important for recovery. In the hospital it can be hard to get quality uninterrupted sleep. Talk to your healthcare team to discuss what options are available to help you get as much quality sleep as possible while you recover.

7. Moving about: Moving after surgery is one of the best things you can do to lower your risk of complications. Talk to your healthcare team about ways you can increase your activity safely after your surgery.

8. Support team: Your friends and family should be present as much as able and allowed as you recover. Having your support system available and involved will help you recover as safely, comfortably and quickly as possible.

Talk About Your Expected Recovery After Discharge

Talk with your surgeon about your expected recovery period. Discuss whether you will need any special help or assistance when you go home and what options are available to you to obtain this assistance.