

Information You Should Know Before Your Orthopaedic Intervention

(Nine important pieces of information to help you make an informed decision about your procedure)

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Patients who are referred to musculoskeletal and orthopaedic services should expect their surgeon and other associated healthcare providers to provide adequate information before, during and after treatment to enable individuals to make a sound, informed decision about their proposed surgery or treatment.

The purpose of this paper is to give some guidance about the information you should expect to receive prior to your proposed orthopaedic intervention.

You should expect to:

- See the consultant named on the appointment letter
- Receive a provisional or final diagnosis
- Be offered an opinion and full explanation of any treatment or surgery
- Discuss alternative treatments
- Know how long the wait will be for surgery/treatment
- Discuss expectations of the treatment or surgery
- Have an idea of the length of recovery
- Know any restrictions to normal activities during recovery
- Be informed of possible complications of the treatment or surgery

1. See the consultant named on the appointment letter

Your GP may have referred you to a specific consultant, or you may have taken an option through Choose and Book, or your GP may have referred you through an Any Qualified Provider letter. Irrespective of how you have been referred, and unless you are advised differently before your appointment, you should expect to meet with the consultant named in your appointment letter. In most clinics training registrars may initially assess your case but the consultant will personally advise on potential investigation and treatment. You should also expect this consultant to perform your surgery or treatment unless you are otherwise advised. If another surgeon is to perform your surgery or treatment, this should be discussed with you and you should meet the new surgeon in a timely manner, before being asked to sign an informed consent form. This will normally and ideally take place at a pre-operative assessment clinic.

2. Receive a provisional or final diagnosis

A provisional diagnosis means the surgeon may have an idea of what condition may need treatment, but you may need extra tests or scans to confirm this diagnosis. Once all tests and scans are complete and analysed, your consultant should be able to make a final diagnosis and advise you by letter, telephone or, ideally, at a follow up appointment.

3. Be offered an opinion and full explanation of any treatment or surgery

Your consultant should fully describe your condition and agreed proposed treatment or surgery including how it will improve your condition. You should also be clear how long the procedure will take and how long you will need to stay in hospital. You should be aware of the likely follow up and associated management e.g. stitch removal, plaster treatment etc. Your surgeon should also tell you if the surgery involves any implants or devices (i.e. hip or knee replacement) and describe the recommended implant or device.

For more complex procedures, you may be asked to return to a separate clinic where a full explanation of the procedure is discussed.

If the treatment has a name, it might be helpful to write it down so you can do your own research.

4. Discuss alternative treatments

If immediate surgery is not necessary or appropriate, your consultant will discuss alternative treatments such as a course of physiotherapy, an injection or just resting and measuring the progress of your recovery.

5. Know how long the wait will be for surgery/treatment

The waiting time for any surgery or treatment will vary between hospitals and regions. Your consultant should be able to give you an estimate of waiting times in their Hospital.

6. Discuss expectations of the treatment or surgery

Your consultant will ask you what you hope to achieve by having this procedure (i.e. I expect to return to a full and active life after the procedure). They will discuss realistic outcomes of the surgery or treatment.

7. Have an idea of the length of recovery

Everyone reacts differently to surgery or treatment. Your consultant will give you guidelines as to how long you may need to be off work, how long before you can drive or return to daily activities and how long before you will feel 'normal' again. You should also know what you will need to do to help yourself recover as quickly as possible.

8. Know any restrictions to normal activities during recovery

To aid your recovery you may need to limit your activities or restrict some movement. For example, some surgeons require hip replacement patients to avoid bending past 90 degrees or cross their legs. Your surgeon will discuss any restrictions with you and advise how long you need to follow any restrictions. However, most Trusts should have hip or knee replacement classes to facilitate this.

9. Be informed of possible complications of the treatment or surgery

The majority of operations and procedures have successful outcomes. However any surgery or treatment can have complications or a negative outcome. Your consultant will discuss these complications with you so that you can give informed consent for the procedure. Some complications might be scary. Your consultant should include the statistical evidence connected with them, especially as it applies to his practice.