

Preparing For Surgery

The thought of having surgery can be daunting, but being physically and mentally prepared can ensure that your surgical experience is as stress-free as possible. Dr Alexander and his team will work with you to put your mind at ease and will be right here with you every step of the way.

Understand Your Procedure

Before choosing to undergo surgery, Dr Alexander will ensure you have all the information you need to feel absolutely comfortable with this decision. Justin feels strongly that patients must be engaged in the decision-making process, ensuring that you can play an active role in your treatment and recovery.

One of the most important aspects of this process is having a clear understanding of what to expect following surgery:

- How will post-operative pain be managed?
- How long will your hospital stay be?
- Will there be any splints, plaster or sling?
- How long will it take to feel completely recovered?
- What is the long-term expectation?

All of these questions will be addressed during your consultation; however we understand that sometimes it can be a lot of information to take on board. We strongly encourage you to get in touch with us should you have any queries about your upcoming surgery and we will be glad to work through these with you.

Medications

Certain medications require careful consideration around surgery. Please ensure that you let us know if you are taking any of the following medications:

- Blood thinners (Aspirin, Plavix, Warfarin, etc)
- Rheumatoid medications
- Steroids
- Diabetic medications (insulin, oral hypoglycaemic agents)

We will work closely with your GP and other treating specialists to ensure that these medications are managed effectively during the peri-operative period.

Smoking

Smoking has a number of harmful effects on the body and in an ideal world we would encourage you to quit smoking prior to surgery. Obviously this is easier said than done, but if you would like advice as to where you can receive expert help with this process we would be more than happy to point you in the right direction.

The reason this is important is that it has been repeatedly shown that stopping or cutting down smoking will reduce your risk of a number of post-operative complications including infection, wound healing problems and delayed bone healing.

Fasting

You will need to be fasted prior to surgery – having an empty stomach significantly reduces the risk of complications related to your anaesthetic. To minimize how long you may be fasting, once we have confirmed the exact order of the operating list, you will be contacted and given comprehensive instructions regarding fasting times and when to present to hospital. We can also give this information in writing if preferred.

If like many people, you are on autopilot first thing in the morning, you may need to build in some extra safety steps to ensure you do not inadvertently eat or drink anything. Put a sticky note on the fridge the night before surgery and maybe put a rubber band around your wallet to stop you from buying your morning coffee. Even chewing gum tricks the stomach into producing digestive fluids that can be just as problematic and should be avoided.

Preparing to Return Home

Following surgery, your arm may be placed into a sling or splint, and there will usually be some short-term limitations on what activities you can perform. It will be important to consider what support you may need from family or friends to help with activities such as:

- Driving (read more about Driving After Surgery on the website)
- Day-to-day self care activities (dressing, showering, etc)
- Meal preparation
- Shopping
- Laundry
- Care for children or dependents

Simple steps such as placing regularly used items on lower shelves to minimize reaching, or organising a short-term meal delivery service can make an enormous difference the first few weeks following surgery.

If you anticipate that you will have difficulty managing post-operatively, we have a pre-admission nurse and a dedicated discharge coordinator here at sportsmed who can discuss with you the wide range of support options available.

Work

Injuries and surgery are often inconvenient and can have an impact on your ability to work. It is important before embarking on surgery to have a clear expectation of when you may be able to return to modified and full duties so that you can make necessary arrangements. Throughout your follow up, Dr Alexander will make regular assessments and tailor advice regarding return to work so that you remain in the loop.

For injuries and conditions being managed under a 'Return To Work' claim, this process will be coordinated with your case manager. Even though it may seem overwhelming or confusing at the outset, the team here at sportsmed will walk you through this process so that you can focus on what's important - your recovery!

Follow Up

Dr Alexander believes in closely following up his patients to ensure that you achieve the outcome you deserve. You will never feel abandoned in your recovery, and at any stage additional follow up appointments can be made as required.

When your surgery is booked, we will often book your post-operative appointments in advance – please ensure that you are available to attend these appointments. We will also organise allied health appointments such as physiotherapy or hand therapy to ensure your recovery gets off to a good start.

If you live outside of Adelaide we will accommodate you as best we can, often coordinating your post-operative care with your local GP or even a local orthopaedic surgeon.

Understanding your post-operative plan and playing an active role in it will ensure you achieve the best possible outcome from surgery.