



MeningiomaUK
Brain Tumour Support

Patient Information Sheet 9

Spinal Surgery Questions

1. What type of spinal surgery are you recommending?

There are many different types of spine surgery. Ask your surgeon to explain the procedure and describe to you exactly what is going to be done. For example, if you are having a discectomy find out why it is necessary to remove the disc. For other types of spine surgery e.g. meningioma tumours, find out exactly where in the spinal column your surgery will take place and if it will be done from the front (anteriorly) or the back (posteriorly).

Also, ask your surgeon if any instrumentation (spinal hardware such as screws, plates or cages designed to help stabilize the spine) will be used, if you will need a bone graft, and how large your incision will be.

Your surgeon may be able to draw a picture, show you a diagram, give you written information or refer you to other resources such as books, videos, or websites that can help you better understand the procedure.

2. Why do I need surgery?

Find out the purpose of the surgery and how it relates to the diagnosis of your spinal condition. For example, is the procedure designed to relieve pain? Remove the tumour or to de-bulk it? Reduce symptoms? Improve function?

3. Are there alternatives to surgery?

Talk to your surgeon about other options to see if there is any reason to try a different treatment option or postpone surgery.

4. What are the benefits of having the operation?

Find out what you will gain from the surgery. For example, a spinal fusion may mean you can return to work again pain free. Ask your surgeon how long the benefits will last or if you will need another operation at a later date.

5. What are the risks of having the operation?

All surgeries carry a risk of complications, such as infection, excessive bleeding, reactions to anesthesia and injury. Be sure you understand all of the possible complications before you agree to have any surgical procedure. Also, talk to your surgeon about any side effects after the surgery, such as swelling, soreness, and pain and how these will be managed. What aftercare and post-operative support will be available when you go home.

6. What if I choose not to have this operation?

After you have learned about the risks, ask your surgeon what would happen if you chose not to have the surgery. Will your condition get worse? Will you have more pain?

7. Where can I get a second opinion?

If you are undecided or uncertain about the treatment you are being offered, getting another consultant's opinion about whether or not to have surgery is a good way to ensure you are making the right decision. Talk to your GP who can arrange a second opinion for you if you want. Or ask for advice and information on second opinions.

8. What has been your experience with this procedure?

Ask your surgeon how many of these surgeries he or she has performed. Get a feel for his or her experience with your condition. Ask your surgeon if he or she can refer you to someone who has also had this operation.

9. Where will the operation be done?

Find out where your procedure will be performed. If you have a choice, choose the hospital/facility that has the most experience and the highest success rate in treating your condition. Today, many spinal surgeries are done on an outpatient basis, which means you may not need to stay in the hospital overnight. Talk to your doctor about whether or not your procedure will require you to stay in the hospital and for how long. What aftercare and help is available when you return home after your operation?