

Topics to discuss with your specialist



It's important that you feel comfortable about all areas of your proposed treatment, right from the start. The best way to do this is by being open and honest with your specialist. It's their job to help you understand all areas of your procedure and answer any questions you may have. Here are a few topics to cover:

Understand your health concern and treatment

- Ask about your condition, diagnosis and likely outcome.
- What's the treatment for the condition?
- What's the aim of the procedure? Is it to cure you, give pain relief, etc.
- What does the treatment/surgery involve?
- How many of these surgeries does the specialist perform each year?
- What's the success/failure rate generally?
- What are the risks, side effects or complications of this surgery, if any?
- What can you do other than surgery? What's the probable success of these alternative treatments?
- Is the surgery really needed at this time or can you have it later? What are the pros and cons of delaying?
- Will you require treatment before the surgery?
- When could you have the surgery?
- Which hospitals does your specialist practice at? You may be able to choose one that is more convenient for you and your family.
- How long will you be in hospital for?
- What happens with the medications you're taking and this surgery? Will there be any interactions, side effects?
- How should you prepare for surgery?
- Will you need anaesthesia and what are the risks?
- Will you require a prosthetic?
- What should you expect during recovery? Can you be discharged from hospital early?
- Will you require additional treatment, like rehabilitation, after surgery? If so, can you do it from home?
- Will you need extra medication afterwards, like pain relief?
- How soon can you resume your daily activities, like driving, going back to work?
- Will you require follow-up appointments? If so, how many?

The importance of informed consent

It means you understand your condition and any proposed medical treatment, risks, complications and benefits. Your specialist legally must provide this to you in a way you understand. You may then sign a consent form which gives legal consent to the doctor to perform the treatment.

Have a clear understanding of your bills

If out-of-pocket costs are a concern, you can always have open and honest discussions about this with your specialist, even if they might not be in a position to accommodate some requests.

- Find out what the consultation fees are and if they bulk bill or provide a concession.
- What are all the fees for this procedure?
- Can they provide you with an itemised quote, including MBS item numbers?
- Will the cost be covered by Medicare, your concession card or by private health insurance?
- What will your out-of-pocket costs be?
- Are they part of Health Partners Access Gap scheme? If yes, ask for a written, itemised quote of the Access Gap scheme fees.
- Will there be additional surgeons and/or anaesthetists at your surgery? If yes, ask for a written copy of all their costs. Also check if they're part of the Health Partners Access Gap Scheme.
- Do you have the option of working with a team that will provide the lowest out-of-pocket medical costs?
- What are your public vs private system treatment options?
- Will you need follow-up appointments post-surgery and can they be bulk billed?

What's the Health Partners Access Gap Scheme?

Access Gap is an agreement Health Partners has with a network of specialists designed to lower or eliminate medical out-of-pocket costs for patients undergoing a procedure in hospital.

If your specialist participates, you'll have either no medical gap or a reduced gap. This amount should be disclosed to you in writing upfront, prior to your procedure. Health Partners is billed directly, not you, making your claiming easier. Ask the specialist upfront whether they'll apply the Access Gap for your situation and if they do, have them quote you in writing the amount they'll charge.

How can I find an Access Gap specialist?

1. Call us on 1300 113 113
2. Search 'Doctor Search' at healthpartners.com.au

Know your recovery options

As a Health Partners member, you might be able to access:

- Hospital in the home:** If you're clinically able and your doctor agrees, you might be able to leave hospital early and finish your recovery in the comfort of your own home. We can help you with this by coordinating nursing treatment in your home.
- Rehab in the home:** If you're able to return home and need formal rehab, a tailored, comprehensive rehab program can be designed and delivered by professionals in the comfort of your own home.

To check if you're able to access these programs call Health Partners on 1300 113 113

Extra hints and tips

- ✓ Check if you're being charged a booking or administration fee and what it's for – these fees are often not valid charges and should be questioned. If in doubt, ask Health Partners.
- ✓ Ring Health Partners once you have your quote so we can check your cover and assist with alternatives if you're unsure.
- ✓ Don't be afraid to discuss your fees. Your specialist might reduce their fees if affordability is an issue.
- ✓ Let the specialist know you are researching all your options.

For more useful information search 'going to hospital' at healthpartners.com.au

The importance of informed financial consent

It's your right to receive in writing, from your specialist and hospital, a breakdown of all costs associated with your treatment. They need to do this for any additional attending health professional, like your anaesthetist, assistant surgeon etc. and for prosthetics and pathology, if used. Most specialists, including the anaesthetist, may request this gap to be paid prior to surgery. You need to understand and consent to these charges before the procedure can go ahead.

**Your
First Call**
before planning
surgery

1300 113 113

Plan better | Pay less | Recover easier