



Pre-surgery checklist: What you need to organise

As many as 350,000 New Zealanders have elective surgery every year, and every one of them needs to take steps to be prepared for the surgery itself and what follows.

This includes things to ask and understand from the surgical team, what you need to do to prepare your body for surgery, ensuring all expenses are covered, and more.

If you're preparing for an elective surgery, here are a few helpful checklists to go over to make sure you're fully prepared.

Things to discuss and questions to ask your surgical team

- ask what to expect from the moment you arrive to when you wake up from surgery
- understand the greatest risks and their likelihoods
- ask about any effects of the surgery or anaesthesia and what to expect for recovery
- find out if Covid-19 may have any impact (such as if it might delay your surgery, or if you won't be allowed visitors)
- how long will you be in the hospital before you can go home?
- how long until you can live 'normally' post-op?
- how long until you can return to work?
- what will you need to do to prepare for surgery yourself?
- who will be on your surgical team and what are their roles?

Preparing yourself for surgery

Be sure to always follow the instructions of your physician. These are guidelines usually prescribed prior to surgery, but yours may differ.

- avoid alcohol
- [exercise](#) to help improve your general physical health
- do not eat or drink prior to surgery if instructed. Even a snack can be enough to cancel your surgery due to it being a risk for some operations
- remove/do not wear nail polish or jewellery
- eat a healthy diet in the days and weeks leading up to the surgery
- do not wear makeup to the operation
- avoid smoking for at least two weeks prior to surgery
- avoid spending time with anyone unwell with colds, flus or other bugs
- take any medications as prescribed by your surgeon

Organise bills and payments

- find out how much the surgery and hospital stay will cost (unless it is covered by the public health system)
- find out how much is covered by health insurance (if any) and set up a payment plan for any out-of-pocket costs
- ensure your usual bills are covered or planned for during your recovery period
- set aside an emergency fund for additional charges or costs just in case

Organise documents and paperwork

- prepare any instructions your family will need while you are recovering
- ensure your medical history is up to date and correct

- in the unlikely event of an incident, ensure your [will is up to date and accurate](#)
- share your [funeral insurance](#) details with your next of kin (or tuck it amongst the other paperwork so as not to frighten them, but to also make sure they have it in the very worst case scenario)

Make transport plans

- is someone picking you up from the hospital? Make sure you have a reliable way to get home comfortably

Pack a bag

- your phone and charging cable
- clothes including pyjamas, day clothes and spare underwear
- toiletries
- glasses or contact lenses and case
- entertainment items such as books or magazines
- a small amount of cash for snacks and coffees etc
- medications (be sure to check with your physician about continuing to take them)

Inform family and friends

- let loved ones know that you're going in for surgery so they won't worry if you don't answer your phone
- give them a timeframe of when you will be home again
- make sure they know your favourite snacks to bring you as you recuperate!

Surgeries are common and while your talented doctors, nurses, and surgical team will be doing most of the heavy lifting, you can still take steps to prepare for the operation.

Another way to stay organised and ahead of life events is to make sure you have your [funeral insurance](#) sorted, so you have more time to focus on the important moments and living your best life.