It is very important for you to tell your doctor about the medicines that you are taking and any allergies that you may have. Write down this information and show it to your doctor.

Medicine	What is it for?	When do you take it?

Allergies

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

References

VHA Directive 2002-070. Department of Veterans Affairs, September 2002.

20 Tips to Help Prevent Medical Errors. Retrieved 7/5/02 from http://www.ahcpr.gov/consumer/20tips.htm

Ways You Can Help Your Family Prevent Medical Errors! Retrieved 7/5/02 from http://www.ahcpr.gov/consumer/5tipseng/5tips.htm

DEPARTMENT OF VETERAN AFFAIRS
NATIONAL CENTER FOR PATIENT SAFETY

VA National Center for Patient Safety
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UNDERSTANDING YOUR SURGERY

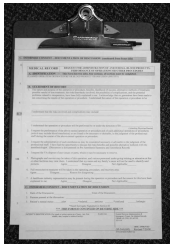
Ensuring Correct Surgery

This pamphlet will help you to understand what will happen before your surgery and how your doctors and nurses are taking steps to make sure that everything goes as planned.

Days to a couple hours before your surgery…

Review all the information on the Consent Form before you sign it.

You, or a legal guardian, must sign a consent form before any surgery can take place. It should be written in words that you can understand. If you are not sure about anything, ask.



Consent Form

Many of your questions will be answered by reading the consent form. Here are some good questions to ask in order to better understand your surgery:

1. What is the name of the surgery that will be done?

_____

2. Where or what body part will you be operating on? (Write down if it is the left or right side, if needed.)

_____
_____

3. Are there any alternatives to surgery?

_____
_____

4. What are the risks of this surgery?

_____
_____

5. What is likely to happen if I don't have the surgery?

_____
_____

6. Who is in charge of the surgical team? (Write the name here.)

_____
_____

7. About how long will it take to recover after the surgery?

_____
_____

The doctor or other member of the surgical team will make a mark with a pen on the part of your body where the surgery will happen. This should be done BEFORE you go into the operating room.

Some doctors will sign their name or initials. Some doctors will make an "X" or "Yes" mark on the correct body part.

Staff will mark the place to be operated on

Check that the mark does not rub off. It will be very important for the doctors and nurses to see the mark while you are asleep just before the surgery. Tell your doctor or nurse if the mark rubs or washes off before the surgery.

An hour, or less, before the surgery…

While you are still awake, a doctor or nurse will ask you to say your name, your social security number or birth date, and the part of your body that will be operated on.

Don't be alarmed by these questions; your doctor knows who you are. This is how they make sure they have everything right.

Say your name and SS# and where the operation will be

Just before the surgery begins…

Just before the surgery begins, everyone in the operating room will take a short "time out" and check for the last time that they have the right patient and are doing the right operation on the right body part. You may be asleep for this part.

"Time out" just before starting the surgery

The doctors and nurses in the VA are taking these important steps to make sure that everything goes as planned for your surgery.