

Questions to ask your Surgeon

Whipple's Surgery (pancreaticoduodenectomy)

Experience a key factor in success

Whipple's surgery is an extremely complex surgery with the results of surgery often dependent on the experience of the surgeon, specifically relating to the number of times the Whipple's surgery has been performed.

An open and frank discussion with your surgeon might help you make appropriate choices relating to your treatment. The following are some of the questions that you could ask.

Surgeons experience

- How many pancreatic cancers are performed at the hospital on a yearly basis?
- How many Whipple's surgeries have you performed?
- How many Whipple's surgeries do you do annually?

Note: High volume centres may have better outcomes for patients

The operation

- What should I expect immediately after surgery?
- Will I get pain relief? What will it be?
- Will I have drain tubes? If so, where will they be?
- Will I have an IV (drip) for fluids and medications?
- Will I have a Urinary catheter?

After surgery

- How long will I be in Intensive Care?
- When will I start eating food?
- How often will the Surgeon check on me when I'm on the ward?
- How long will be my length of stay in hospital?
- What are the complications that may happen immediately after Whipple's surgery?
- How long will I have drain tubes?
- When will my stomach start to work again?
- What is Gastroparesis? How common is it?
- When will my small intestine work again?
- When will I start using my bowels again?
- What are some complications that may occur after major surgery?

After discharge

- What are the complications of the Whipple's procedure?
- What are some of the long-term consequences of the Whipple's procedure?
- Will I have Diabetes after my surgery?
- Will I need to make alterations in my diet?
- Will I lose weight after surgery?
- How will I feel when I go home? Can I nap during the day?
- Will I have trouble concentrating or difficulty sleeping?

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Medications

- What kind of medications will I take home?
- Will I be prescribed pain medication to take at home?

Incision site

- When will my dressing be removed?
- Can I wear clothes over the top of my incision?
- Can I wash the incision area?
- What should I do if the incision is red/swollen/hot to touch?
- Can I use soap, moisturiser, powder when having a wash?
- When do the stitches get taken out?

Activity

- When can I resume driving again?
- Can I climb stairs?
- Can I go outside?
- Can I travel long distances?
- How many kilograms can I lift?
- When can I resume light exercise? Heavy exercise?
- When can I see an exercise physiologist? Do I need a referral?
- When can I resume sexual activity?
- When can I resume swimming?

We're here to help

For more information about questions for your doctor or medical team, contact our Specialist Support Team on 1300 881 698 or email support@pancare.org.au.