

Preparing for successful surgery

If you are scheduled to have surgery, you may feel afraid or worried. At the same time, you are about to take an important step in your health and healing.

Research shows that patients who use relaxation techniques to prepare for surgery have greater comfort, optimism, and calm. They also recover more rapidly and enjoy shorter hospital stays. Using guided imagery and affirmations, Kaiser Permanente's new CD, *Preparing for Successful Surgery*, can help you achieve these desirable results.

Guided imagery

Guided imagery is a gentle but powerful technique that focuses and directs the mind. It involves all of the senses in the creation of positive images. Almost anyone can do it.

Guided imagery works because of three simple elements: the mind/body connection, relaxation, and a sense of control.

1. **Mind/Body connection:** Your thoughts, feelings, and moods have a powerful effect on the health of your body. To the body, images created in the mind can be almost as real as actual events. The body does not know the difference. This is the mind/body connection.
2. **Relaxation:** Listening to music and a calming voice produces a state of relaxed mental focus. The relaxed mind can create healing images that encourage rapid recovery.

3. **Sense of control:** Having a sense of control can help you feel better and do better. Feeling in control can lead to a positive outlook. It can also increase your sense of inner strength, preparedness and calm.

Together, these three elements create a relaxed state with the mind focused on images of comfort and healing. The body perceives these qualities as real and helps prepare you for a quicker recovery.

Affirmations

Affirmations are short statements that enable a sense of control by giving the body specific healing instructions. They promote positive outcomes, such as reduced blood loss and decreased discomfort. Examples of affirmations include:

- ❖ *I see myself getting through this surgery with no complications, minimal bleeding, and little discomfort.*
- ❖ *I can let go of worrying about things I cannot control and focus on my own inner peace.*
- ❖ *I see myself recovering quickly and easily.*

Try the affirmations in these examples, on the CD, or create your own. These positive statements will empower you during surgery to reduce physical and mental stress.

Tips for using the CD

Find a quiet place where you can remain undisturbed for 20 to 40 minutes. Get comfortable. Listen to the CD with headphones, if possible.

Imagery and affirmations work best in a relaxed atmosphere. Don't worry about doing things perfectly. The more you listen to the CD, the easier it will become to relax and calm your mind.

Play the CD and allow yourself to follow the suggestions you hear.

- Listen to track 1 (Introduction to Guided Imagery) once.
- Then, listen to track 2 (Imagery for Surgery) and track 3 (Affirmations) twice a day on each of the days leading up to your surgery.
- After surgery, listen to track 3 (Affirmations) and track 4 (Imagery for Healing) twice a day, everyday, until anxiety and discomfort resolve. Keep in mind that your recovery period might range from several days to several weeks.
- Track 5 contains relaxing music that can be played after listening to imagery and affirmations, or to help you sleep. Listen to track 5 as much as you like during the days leading up to (and following) your surgery. You may want to inquire about listening to track 5 on headphones during your surgery. Be sure to ask.

“Relaxation, imagery, and affirmations have been shown to decrease pain and use of pain medications after surgery, and speed recovery.”

—Dr. Harley Goldberg, Director,
Complementary & Alternative Medicine

Imagery results

Research suggests that patients using imagery to prepare for surgery show significant benefits, including quicker recovery, less discomfort, and less anxiety and depression. Patients using imagery are also able to leave the hospital and return home more quickly.

For example, in one study 130 patients scheduled for surgery were divided into two groups.¹ Group 1 received usual surgical care. Group 2 listened to the *Preparing for Successful Surgery* CD for three days before and for six days after surgery.

The imagery group reported much less discomfort and used about half as much pain medication following surgery. In fact, the patients using imagery had less pain on the first day after surgery than the usual care group felt on the sixth day after surgery.

“I was a little resistant at first, wondering how this CD would help me heal. But I was pleasantly surprised at how relaxed it made me feel. Because of this program, I had little pain and a successful surgery.”

– Kaiser Permanente surgery patient

¹Tusek DL et al., 1997. Guided imagery: a significant advance in the care of patients undergoing elective colorectal surgery. *Diseases of the Colon and Rectum*. 40: 172-8

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other medical professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult your doctor.

At the hospital

You will be able to listen to the program while waiting for surgery and in the recovery room after surgery. If you do not bring your own portable CD player, ask if one can be provided for you. Ask your medical professional about playing the CD during surgery as well.

If you go home on the day of the surgery, remember to listen to the program twice a day until you are fully recovered.

If you are admitted to the hospital, the nursing staff may help you use the imagery, affirmations, and music at least twice a day. Be sure to ask them.

Once you have recovered from surgery, please return the CD to your surgical team so that others may benefit from this program as well.

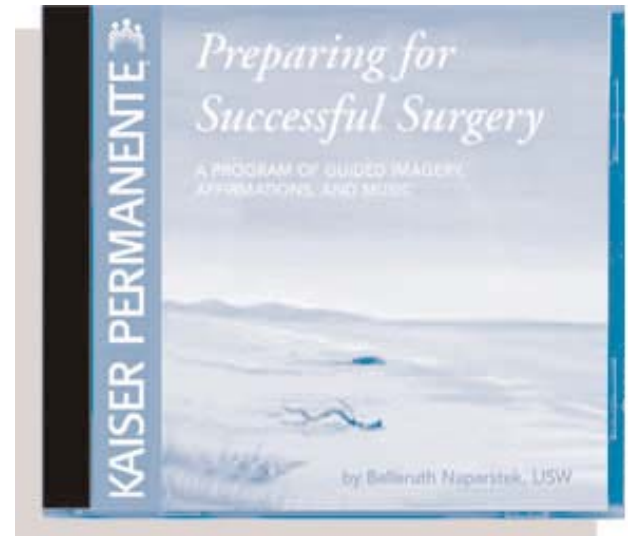
Support systems

Surgery is something you do not have to go through alone. Seeking the support of others can increase your comfort level before, during, and after surgery. Create a support system by asking a close friend or family member to check on you regularly. You may also consider talking to members of your surgical team. Discuss concerns and ask questions. If necessary, request help with the use of affirmations and guided imagery techniques.

Additional resources

For more information on mental health, stress reduction, and the mind/body connection, refer to your *Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook* or visit our Web site at members.kp.org.

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A program of guided imagery, affirmations, and music to create a sense of control and speed recovery

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