



Ask: **Is an operation the best choice for my condition?**

Learn: Research studies show that certain operations and procedures are done more often in certain parts of the country without medical reason. Before you decide on surgery, ask your doctor:

- What is the operation? Why do I need it?
- What are the likely benefits? What are the risks and how often do they occur?
- Are there other ways to treat this condition? If so, what are they and how well do they work?
- How long will I stay in the hospital? How long will it take to recover at home? When can I get back to my normal activities?
- How will the operation affect how I feel and what I can do long term?
- What will the costs and charges be?

Ask: **If I decide on surgery, where should I have it done and who should do it?**

Learn: Some surgeries are done at a hospital or clinic without an overnight stay. Others require a hospital stay. Choose a safe hospital and skilled surgeon. Find out:

- How many surgeries like mine are done in the hospital or clinic each year? Usually, surgical teams are more skilled when they do many surgeries like yours, rather than a few.
- How safe will I be in the hospital? What does the hospital do to reduce errors?
- Who will be my surgeon? What is their training? How many surgeries like mine do they perform each year? What is their track record for success?

Use the MHMC web site:

Find out how hospitals rate on certain measures to prevent medical mistakes

www.mhmc.info/hospitals

Read an interview with John Fields, RN, about why a hospital stay is risky and what you can do to help prevent mistakes at www.mhmc.info/safety

Ask: **What are the other kinds of information I need before I make a final decision?**

Learn: For surgery that is not an emergency, you can usually take your time to “cover all the bases.” Find out:

- Do I need or want a 2nd or even 3rd opinion? You can ask your doctor to refer you or find another doctor on your own. It’s usually wise to get another opinion and doctors usually think it’s a good idea.
- What are my insurance benefits? What bills will I have to pay? Check with your benefits office or insurance plan to find out.

Decide: **Is surgery right for me? Do the benefits outweigh the possible risks?
Does the hospital work to prevent mistakes? Is the surgeon highly skilled?**