TIP SHEET: GYNECOLOGIC SURGERY PREPARATION AND RECOVERY

The following suggestions, compiled from our community, will help you prepare for your upcoming surgery and make your recovery experience more comfortable.

A checklist from FORCE: FacingOurRisk.Org

Insurance coverage

- [ ] Verify before your surgical consultation that the surgeon, hospital and anesthesia team accept your health insurance and are in-network providers for your plan.
- [ ] Make sure your insurance agrees to cover your surgery, including the cost of the surgical facility and the entire surgical team.
- [ ] Ask your surgeon's office to explain your deductible and co-pay (if any).

Emotional well-being

- [ ] It can be extremely helpful to connect with others who are or have been in the same situation as you. Let FORCE help. Participate in our Peer Navigation Program for personalized support, attend a support meeting, or visit our online message board or Facebook group. Visit: FacingOurRisk.org/support.
- [ ] Explore yoga, deep breathing or other stress-reducing therapies to relax you before surgery.
- [ ] Talk to your doctor about seeing a therapist or getting a prescription for anti-anxiety medication if you experience presurgery anxiety.

Notes:

Get your home ready

- [ ] Stock up on at least three days of meals. Focus on foods that are easily prepared, such as broth/soup, juice, fruits, veggies, rice, crackers and yogurt. Avoid broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts and other gassy foods.
- [ ] Clean your house and take care of household tasks ahead of time. Decide which tasks should be done before your surgery and which can wait until you recover.
- [ ] Set up a ?recovery area? in your home. Clear off an end table where you can keep medications, the TV remote, phone, books or e-tablet, heating pad and a beverage.
- [ ] Purchase a leak-proof sippy cup or water bottle with a built-in straw.
- [ ] Consider buying throat lozenges for postsurgery irritation; a stool softener; anti-gas medications, such as Mylicon, Maalox or Gas-X; and a handheld fan.

Notes:

Preparing for surgery

- [ ] Provide your surgeon with a list of your allergies and all of the medications, supplements and herbs you take.
- [ ] Be sure you receive and follow your surgeon?s preoperative and postoperative instructions.
- [ ] Follow your doctor?s instructions regarding the foods and liquids you should have or avoid before surgery. Your doctor may recommend drinking a liquid before surgery to clear your intestines.
- [ ] Take care of personal matters that won?t be possible during recovery, such as dentist or eye doctor appointments, haircuts and/or coloring or regular appointments for your children.
- [ ] Line up help. List things that will require help during your recovery and recruit reliable friends and family to help. Don?t be afraid to ask for help cleaning the house, preparing meals, or doing laundry. Ask for volunteers to transport your kids until you can drive, walk the dogs, clean kitty litter, pick up groceries and anything else you need. If you?re tech-savvy, consider creating and sharing a Google spreadsheet. You can also make a shareable support list at Caringbridge.org or with the CaringBridge app.
- [ ] Schedule childcare during your recovery. You will initially be unable to lift, drive or carry your children.
- [ ] Talk to your small children before surgery, giving as much information as they need to be comforted. Make sure they understand that you may not be able to pick them up for a while after surgery, and they will need to be gentle with you.
- [ ] Many women find that yoga pants or pajamas are comfortable and easy to put on and remove after surgery.
- [ ] You may experience symptoms of menopause after surgery. These may include hot flashes, as well as vaginal dryness and irritation. Each woman?s experience is different. Spend some time before your surgery exploring tips for managing possible symptoms, including handheld fans for sudden hot flashes, cooling pillows and cool packs. Have cotton pajamas, an extra set of sheets and light clothing for layering to handle night sweats.

Notes:

Suggested items to pack for the hospital

- [ ] ID and insurance card. Leave valuables and jewelry at home.
- [ ] If you are expected to stay overnight, bring any prescription medications you take in their original, labeled containers. Ask about your hospital?s policies regarding prescription medications for in-patients.
- [ ] Comfortable slip-on shoes, pants or skirt with elastic or drawstring waistband or garments recommended by your doctor.
- [ ] Lip balm and throat lozenges for postsurgery irritation.
- [ ] Advance directives (optional).

Suggestions for a comfortable recovery

- [ ] Follow your doctor?s orders, including activity restrictions and medication timing.
- [ ] Be kind to yourself. It?s important to understand and accept temporary physical limitations while you heal.

Resources

- [ ] FORCE support and navigation programs: https://facingourrisk.org/support.
- [ ] The Menopause Society: https://menopause.org.

Notes: