

## **Preparing for surgery**

In this video we're going to talk about preparing for surgery, including:

- Surgery as a treatment for womb cancer
- The emotional impact of being advised to have surgery
- Things you can do to encourage a smooth recovery
- And preparing for surgical menopause

The main treatment for womb cancer is surgery. This usually involves removing the womb (called a hysterectomy), ovaries, and fallopian tubes, and sometimes other structures such as lymph nodes.

Rarely, people with womb cancer may also need bowel surgery as well as a hysterectomy. Your healthcare team will tell you if this is the case.

If womb cancer is found early, surgery may be the only treatment that's needed. However, some people are advised to have additional (or adjuvant) treatment such as radiotherapy and chemotherapy.

Sometimes, surgery isn't recommended. This may be because the cancer has spread to other parts of the body and can't be removed with an operation; or if you can't have a general anaesthetic due to healthcare reasons.

And if you're of childbearing age, and have a slow-growing womb cancer that hasn't spread very far, it may be possible for you to have fertility-sparing hormonal treatment instead of surgery. However, this is not a standard treatment, so speak to your healthcare team to see if this an appropriate option for you.

### **[How you might feel about the prospect of surgery]**

Once given a diagnosis of womb cancer, many people are keen to have surgery as soon as possible. For others, the prospect of losing their womb can stir up many emotions. This can depend on whether you've been through the menopause and if you have, or want, children. Everyone is different in the way they feel about having a hysterectomy, and it's okay to feel the way that you do.

Being advised that you need major surgery to treat womb cancer can be frightening, and many people feel overwhelmed and alone. However, surgery offers the best chance of removing your cancer, and also provides information that will help your healthcare team decide whether you would benefit from further treatment such as radiotherapy or chemotherapy.

If you have any concerns or are not sure whether surgery is right for you, we recommend speaking to your Clinical Nurse Specialist, or CNS, or healthcare team so that they can understand how you're feeling and support you.

### **[Preparing for a smooth recovery]**

There are lots of things you can do before surgery that will improve your recovery afterwards. These include:

- Practising some pelvic floor and core exercises — you can find more information about how to do these exercises on our website
- Taking regular exercise
- Eating a balanced healthy diet
- And stopping smoking

You may be offered what is called an enhanced recovery programme, which means that your healthcare team will provide you with the support and information that you need to help you recover quicker after surgery.

### **[Preparing for surgical menopause]**

Many people face the prospect of menopausal symptoms following surgery due to the removal of their ovaries. For some, symptoms start straightaway. For others, symptoms can happen sometime afterwards.

People who may be most affected are those who have not yet gone through natural menopause, are peri-menopausal, or are post-menopausal and taking hormone replacement therapy, commonly known as HRT, that they've been advised to stop.

Menopause can have many symptoms, including:

- Mood changes
- Hot flushes and sweating
- Loss of libido
- Vaginal dryness
- Urinary tract infections
- Sleep disturbance
- And brain fog

Although it may not be possible for you to have HRT due to your womb cancer, there are many ways in which the symptoms of menopause can be managed. You may find it helpful to discuss this with your healthcare team before your surgery, and ask them how to get support afterwards; for example, at a menopause clinic.

### **[Where can I find further information and support?]**

For further support and information about any of the topics we've covered in this video, or to find out more about surgery and recovery after surgery, you can go to our other videos or visit our website.

On our website you'll find a list of organisations that provide support and information, and further information on topics such as managing menopause symptoms, and pelvic floor and core muscle strength.