

and death. If we know you're at risk for these problems, we can prescribe medicine to help prevent them.

Here are things you can do before your surgery to keep from having problems.

- Be honest with your healthcare providers about how much alcohol you drink.
- Try to stop drinking alcohol once your surgery is planned. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you:
 - Get a headache.
 - Feel nauseous (like you're going to throw up).
 - Feel more anxious (nervous or worried) than usual.
 - Cannot sleep.

These are early signs of alcohol withdrawal and can be treated.

- Tell your healthcare provider if you cannot stop drinking.
- Ask your healthcare provider questions about drinking and surgery. All your medical information will be kept private, as always.

About smoking

If you smoke or use an electronic smoking device, you can have breathing problems when you have surgery. Vapes and e-cigarettes are examples of electronic smoking devices. Stopping for even a few days before surgery can help prevent breathing problems during and after surgery.

Your healthcare provider will refer you to our [Tobacco Treatment Program](#) if you smoke. You can also reach the program by calling 212-610-0507.

About sleep apnea

Sleep apnea is a common breathing problem. If you have sleep apnea, you stop breathing for short lengths of time while you're asleep. The most common type is obstructive sleep apnea (OSA). With OSA, your airway becomes fully blocked during sleep.

OSA can cause serious problems during and after surgery. Tell us if you have or

think you might have sleep apnea. If you use a breathing device, such as a CPAP machine, bring it on the day of your surgery.

Using MSK MyChart

MSK MyChart (mskmychart.mskcc.org) is MSK's patient portal. You can use it to send and read messages from your care team, view your test results, see your appointment dates and times, and more. You can also invite your caregiver to make their own account so they can see information about your care.

If you do not have an MSK MyChart account, you can sign up at mskmychart.mskcc.org. You can also ask a member of your care team to send you an invitation.

If you need help with your account, call the MSK MyChart Help Desk at 646-227-2593. They are available Monday through Friday between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. (Eastern time).



Presurgical testing (PST)

You'll have a PST appointment before your surgery. You'll get a reminder from your surgeon's office with the appointment date, time, and location. Visit www.msk.org/parking for parking information and directions to all MSK locations.

You can eat and take your usual medicines the day of your PST appointment.

It's helpful to bring these things to your appointment:

- A list of all the medicines you're taking, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, patches, and creams.
- Results of any medical tests done outside of MSK in the past year, if you have them. Examples include results from a cardiac stress test, echocardiogram, or carotid doppler study.
- The names and telephone numbers of your healthcare providers.

You'll meet with an advance practice provider (APP) during your PST appointment. They work closely with MSK's anesthesiology (A-nes-THEE-zee-AH-loh-jee) staff.

These are doctors with special training in using anesthesia during a surgery or procedure.

Your APP will review your medical and surgical history with you. You may have tests to plan your care, such as:

- An electrocardiogram (EKG) to check your heart rhythm.
- A chest X-ray.
- Blood tests.

Your APP may recommend you see other healthcare providers. They'll also talk with you about which medicine(s) to take the morning of your surgery.

Identify your caregiver

Your caregiver has an important role in your care. Before your surgery, you and your caregiver will learn about your surgery from your healthcare providers. After your surgery, your caregiver will take you home when you're discharged. They'll also help you care for yourself at home.

For caregivers



Caring for a person going through cancer treatment comes with many responsibilities. We offer resources and support to help you manage them. Visit www.msk.org/caregivers or read *A Guide for Caregivers* (www.mskcc.org/cancer-care/patient-education/guide-caregivers) to learn more.

Fill out a Health Care Proxy form

If you have not already filled out a Health Care Proxy form, we recommend you do now. If you already filled one out or have any other advance directives, bring them to your next appointment.

A health care proxy is a legal document. It says who will speak for you if you cannot communicate for yourself. This person is called your health care agent.

- To learn about health care proxies and other advance directives, read *Advance Care Planning for People With Cancer and Their Loved Ones*

you to.

To learn more, read *How To Check if a Medicine or Supplement Has Aspirin, Other NSAIDs, Vitamin E, or Fish Oil* (www.mskcc.org/cancer-care/patient-education/common-medications-containing-aspirin-and-other-nonsteroidal-anti-inflammatory-drugs-nsaids).

Stop taking vitamin E, multivitamins, herbal remedies, and other dietary supplements

Vitamin E, multivitamins, herbal remedies, and other dietary supplements can cause bleeding. Stop taking them 7 days before your surgery. If your healthcare provider gives you other instructions, follow those instead.

To learn more, read *Herbal Remedies and Cancer Treatment* (www.mskcc.org/cancer-care/patient-education/herbal-remedies-and-treatment).

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Stop taking nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)

NSAIDs, such as ibuprofen (Advil® and Motrin®) and naproxen (Aleve®), can cause bleeding. Stop taking them 2 days before your surgery. If your healthcare provider gives you other instructions, follow those instead.

To learn more, read *How To Check if a Medicine or Supplement Has Aspirin, Other NSAIDs, Vitamin E, or Fish Oil* (www.mskcc.org/cancer-care/patient-education/common-medications-containing-aspirin-and-other-nonsteroidal-anti-inflammatory-drugs-nsaids).

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Note the time of your surgery

A staff member will call you after 2 p.m. the day before your surgery. If your surgery is scheduled for a Monday, they'll call you the Friday before. If you do not get a call by 7 p.m., call 212-639-5014.

The staff member will tell you what time to get to the hospital for your surgery. They'll also remind you where to go.

MSK www.msk.org/parking

Sleep

Go to bed early and get a full night's sleep.

GLP-1 www.mskcc.org/cancer-care/patient-education/eating-and-drinking-before-your-surgery-or-procedure-when-taking-glp-1-medicines



(12 hours) before surgery

Do not eat or drink anything for 12 hours before surgery

Important Information: If you are taking a GLP-1 medicine, you may need to adjust your eating and drinking before your surgery or procedure. For more information, please read the patient education material *Eating and Drinking Before Your Surgery or Procedure When Taking GLP-1 Medicines* (www.mskcc.org/cancer-care/patient-education/eating-and-drinking-before-your-surgery-or-procedure-when-taking-glp-1-medicines) before your surgery or procedure.

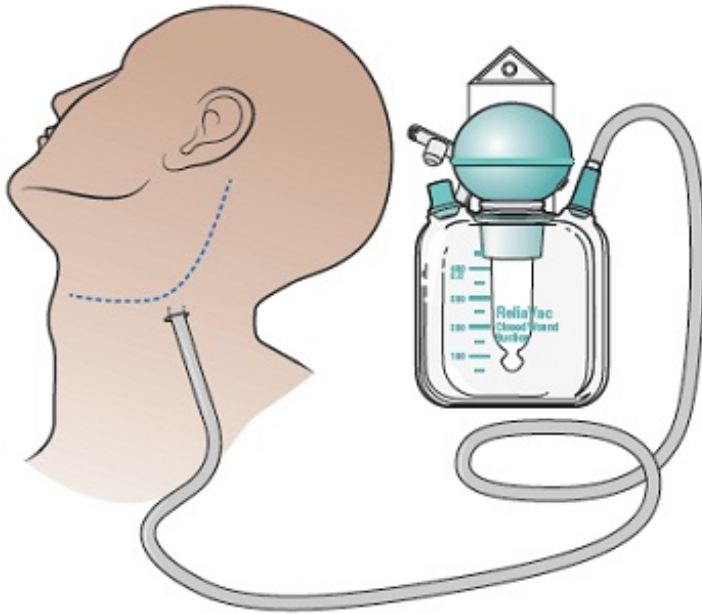
For patients taking a GLP-1 medicine (such as semaglutin, liraglutide, or dulaglutide) for 12 weeks or longer, you may need to adjust your eating and drinking before your surgery or procedure. For more information, please read the patient education material *Eating and Drinking Before Your Surgery or Procedure When Taking GLP-1 Medicines* before your surgery or procedure.

- You may need to adjust your eating and drinking before your surgery or procedure.
- You may need to stop taking your GLP-1 medicine for a certain amount of time before your surgery or procedure.
- You may need to adjust your eating and drinking after your surgery or procedure.
- You may need to adjust your eating and drinking after your surgery or procedure.
 - You may need to adjust your eating and drinking after your surgery or procedure.
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For patients taking a GLP-1 medicine (such as semaglutin, liraglutide, or dulaglutide) for 12 weeks or longer, you may need to adjust your eating and drinking before your surgery or procedure. For more information, please read the patient education material *Eating and Drinking Before Your Surgery or Procedure When Taking GLP-1 Medicines* before your surgery or procedure.

ReliaPac® (Model 3) is a portable, self-contained, battery-powered, closed-circuit, rebreathing system. It is designed for use by patients who require a constant flow of oxygen and carbon dioxide removal. The system consists of a reservoir, a rebreathing chamber, and a scrubber canister. The reservoir is a large, clear plastic container that holds the patient's exhaled gas. The rebreathing chamber is a smaller container that allows the patient to inhale a mixture of oxygen and carbon dioxide. The scrubber canister is a cylindrical container that removes carbon dioxide from the rebreathing chamber. The system is connected to the patient by a nasal cannula and a mouthpiece.



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... *Caring for Your ReliaVac Drain* (www.mskcc.org/cancer-care/patient-education/caring-your-reliavac-drain) |

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your surgeon's office if you have any questions.

To learn more, read *Common Questions About MSK's Recovery Tracker* (www.mskcc.org/cancer-care/patient-education/mymsk-recovery-tracker).

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Follow these guidelines to help manage your pain at home.

- Take your medicines as directed and as needed.
- Call your healthcare provider if the medicine prescribed for you does not help your pain.
- Do not drive or drink alcohol while you're taking prescription pain medicine. Some prescription pain medicines can make you drowsy (very sleepy). Alcohol can make the drowsiness worse.
- You'll have less pain and need less pain medicine as your incision heals. An over-the-counter pain reliever will help with aches and discomfort. Acetaminophen (Tylenol®) and ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin) are examples of over-the-counter pain relievers.
 - Follow your healthcare provider's instructions for stopping your prescription pain medicine.
 - Do not take too much of any medicine. Follow the instructions on the label or from your healthcare provider.
 - Read the labels on all the medicines you're taking. This is very important if you're taking acetaminophen. Acetaminophen is an ingredient in many over-the-counter and prescription medicines. Taking too much can harm

your liver. Do not take more than one medicine that has acetaminophen without talking with a member of your care team.

- Pain medicine should help you get back to your usual activities. Take enough to do your activities and exercises comfortably. You may have a little more pain as you start to be more active.
- Keep track of when you take your pain medicine. It works best 30 to 45 minutes after you take it. Taking it when you first have pain is better than waiting for the pain to get worse.

Preventing and managing constipation

Talk with your healthcare provider about how to prevent and manage constipation. You can also follow these guidelines.

- Go to the bathroom at the same time every day. Your body will get used to going at that time. But if you feel like you need to go, don't put it off.
- Try to use the bathroom 5 to 15 minutes after meals. After breakfast is a good time to go. That's when the reflexes in your colon are strongest.
- Exercise, if you can. Walking is a great type of exercise that can help prevent and manage constipation.
- Drink 8 to 10 (8-ounce) cups (2 liters) of liquids daily, if you can. Choose water, juices (such as prune juice), soups, and milkshakes. Limit liquids with caffeine, such as coffee and soda. Caffeine can pull fluid out of your body.
- Slowly increase the fiber in your diet to 25 to 35 grams per day. Unpeeled fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and cereals contain fiber. If you have an ostomy or recently had bowel surgery, ask your healthcare provider before changing your diet.
- Both over-the-counter and prescription medicines can treat constipation. Ask your healthcare provider before taking any medicine for constipation. This is very important if you have an ostomy or have had bowel surgery. Follow the instructions on the label or from your healthcare provider. Examples of over-the-counter medicines for constipation are:
 - Docusate sodium (Colace®). This is a stool softener (medicine that makes

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Support services

This section has a list of support services. They may help you as you get ready for your surgery and recover after your surgery.

As you read this section, write down questions to ask your healthcare provider.

MSK support services

Admitting Office
 212-639-7606

Call if you have questions about your hospital admission, such as asking for a private room.

Anesthesia

212-639-6840

Call if you have questions about [anesthesia](#).

Blood Donor Room

212-639-7643

Call for information if you're interested in [donating blood or platelets](#).

Bobst International Center

www.msk.org/international

888-675-7722

We welcome patients from around the world and offer many services to help. If you're an international patient, call for help arranging your care.

Counseling Center

www.msk.org/counseling

646-888-0200

Many people find that counseling helps them. Our Counseling Center offers counseling for individuals, couples, families, and groups. We can also prescribe medicine to help if you feel anxious or depressed. Ask a member of your care team for a referral or call the number above to make an appointment.

Food Pantry Program

646-888-8055

We give food to people in need during their cancer treatment. Talk with a member of your care team or call the number above to learn more.

Integrative Medicine and Wellness Service

www.msk.org/integrativemedicine

Our Integrative Medicine and Wellness Service offers many services to complement (go along with) traditional medical care. For example, we offer music therapy, mind/body therapies, dance and movement therapy, yoga, and touch therapy. Call 646-449-1010 to make an appointment for these services.

You can also schedule a consultation with a healthcare provider in the Integrative Medicine and Wellness Service. They'll work with you to make a plan for creating a healthy lifestyle and managing side effects. Call 646-608-8550 to make an appointment for a consultation.

MSK Library

library.mskcc.org

You can visit our library website or email asklibrarian@mskcc.org to talk with the library reference staff. They can help you find more information about a type of cancer. You can also visit the library's [Patient Education Resource Guide](#).

Nutrition Services

www.msk.org/nutrition

212-639-7312

Our Nutrition Service offers nutritional counseling with one of our clinical dietitian nutritionists. Your clinical dietitian nutritionist will talk with you about your eating habits. They can also give advice on what to eat during and after treatment. Ask a member of your care team for a referral or call the number above to make an appointment.

Patient and Community Education

www.msk.org/pe

Visit our patient and community education website to search for educational resources, videos, and online programs.

Patient Billing

646-227-3378

Call if you have questions about preauthorization with your insurance company. This is also called preapproval.

Patient Representative Office

212-639-7202

Call if you have questions about the Health Care Proxy form or concerns about your care.

Perioperative Nurse Liaison

212-639-5935

Call if you have questions about MSK releasing any information while you're having surgery.

Private Duty Nurses and Companions

646-357-9272

You can request private nurses or companions to care for you in the hospital and at home. Call to learn more.

Rehabilitation Services

www.msk.org/rehabilitation

Cancers and cancer treatments can make your body feel weak, stiff, or tight. Some can cause lymphedema (swelling). Our physiatrists (rehabilitation medicine doctors), occupational therapists (OTs), and physical therapists (PTs) can help you get back to your usual activities.

- **Rehabilitation medicine doctors** diagnose and treat problems that affect how you move and do activities. They can design and help coordinate your rehabilitation therapy program, either at MSK or somewhere closer to home. Call Rehabilitation Medicine (Physiatry) at 646-888-1929 to learn more.
- An **OT** can help if you're having trouble doing usual daily activities. For example, they can recommend tools to help make daily tasks easier. A **PT** can teach you exercises to help build strength and flexibility. Call Rehabilitation Therapy at 646-888-1900 to learn more.

Resources for Life After Cancer (RLAC) Program

646-888-8106

At MSK, care does not end after your treatment. The [RLAC Program](#) is for patients and their families who have finished treatment.

This program has many services. We offer seminars, workshops, support groups, and counseling on life after treatment. We can also help with insurance and employment issues.

Sexual Health Programs

Cancer and cancer treatments can affect your sexual health, fertility, or both. MSK's

sexual health programs can help you before, during, or after your treatment.

- Our [Female Sexual Medicine and Women’s Health Program](#) can help with sexual health problems such as premature menopause or fertility issues. Ask a member of your MSK care team for a referral or call 646-888-5076 to learn more.
- Our [Male Sexual and Reproductive Medicine Program](#) can help with sexual health problems such as erectile dysfunction (ED). Ask a member of your care team for a referral or call 646-888-6024 to learn more.

Social Work

www.msk.org/socialwork

212-639-7020

Social workers help patients, families, and friends deal with common issues for people who have cancer. They provide individual counseling and support groups throughout your treatment. They can help you communicate with children and other family members.

Our social workers can also help refer you to community agencies and programs. If you’re having trouble paying your bills, they also have information about financial resources. Call the number above to learn more.

Spiritual Care

212-639-5982

Our chaplains (spiritual counselors) are available to listen, help support family members, and pray. They can contact community clergy or faith groups, or simply be a comforting companion and a spiritual presence. Anyone can ask for [spiritual support](#). You do not have to have a religious affiliation (connection to a religion).

MSK’s interfaith chapel is located near Memorial Hospital’s main lobby. It’s open 24 hours a day. If you have an emergency, call 212-639-2000. Ask for the chaplain on call.

Tobacco Treatment Program

www.msk.org/tobacco

212-610-0507

If you want to quit smoking, MSK has specialists who can help. Call to learn more.

Virtual Programs

www.msk.org/vp

We offer online education and support for patients and caregivers. These are live sessions where you can talk or just listen. You can learn about your diagnosis, what to expect during treatment, and how to prepare for your cancer care.

Sessions are private, free, and led by experts. Visit our website to learn more about Virtual Programs or to register.

External support services

Access-A-Ride

web.mta.info/nyct/paratran/guide.htm

877-337-2017

In New York City, the MTA offers a shared ride, door-to-door service for people with disabilities who can't take the public bus or subway.

Air Charity Network

www.aircharitynetwork.org

877-621-7177

Provides travel to treatment centers.

American Cancer Society (ACS)

www.cancer.org

800-ACS-2345 (800-227-2345)

Offers a variety of information and services, including Hope Lodge, a free place for patients and caregivers to stay during cancer treatment.

Cancer and Careers

www.cancerandcareers.org

646-929-8032

A resource for education, tools, and events for employees with cancer.

CancerCare

www.cancercare.org

800-813-4673

275 Seventh Avenue (Between West 25th & 26th Streets)

New York, NY 10001

Provides counseling, support groups, educational workshops, publications, and financial assistance.

Cancer Support Community

www.cancersupportcommunity.org

Provides support and education to people affected by cancer.

Caregiver Action Network

www.caregiveraction.org

800-896-3650

Provides education and support for people who care for loved ones with a chronic illness or disability.

Corporate Angel Network

www.corpangelnetwork.org

866-328-1313

Offers free travel to treatment across the country using empty seats on corporate jets.

Good Days

www.mygooddays.org

877-968-7233

Offers financial assistance to pay for copayments during treatment. Patients must have medical insurance, meet the income criteria, and be prescribed medicine that's part of the Good Days formulary.

HealthWell Foundation

www.healthwellfoundation.org

800-675-8416

Provides financial assistance to cover copayments, health care premiums, and deductibles for certain medicines and therapies.

Joe's House

www.joeshouse.org

877-563-7468

Provides a list of places to stay near treatment centers for people with cancer and their families.

LGBT Cancer Project

www.lgbtcancer.com

Provides support and advocacy for the LGBT community, including online support groups and a database of LGBT-friendly clinical trials.

LIVESTRONG Fertility

www.livestrong.org/fertility

855-744-7777

Provides reproductive information and support to cancer patients and survivors whose medical treatments have risks associated with infertility.

Look Good Feel Better Program

www.lookgoodfeelbetter.org

800-395-LOOK (800-395-5665)

This program offers workshops to learn things you can do to help you feel better about your appearance. For more information or to sign up for a workshop, call the number above or visit the program's website.

National Cancer Institute

www.cancer.gov

800-4-CANCER (800-422-6237)

National Council on Aging (NCOA)

www.benefitscheckup.org

Provides information and resources for older adults. Offers BenefitsCheckUp®, a free online tool that connects you to prescription assistance programs, including Medicare's Extra Help program.

National LGBT Cancer Network

www.cancer-network.org

Provides education, training, and advocacy for LGBT cancer survivors and those at risk.

Needy Meds

www.needymeds.org

Lists Patient Assistance Programs for brand and generic name medicines.

NYRx

www.health.ny.gov/health_care/medicaid/program/pharmacy.htm

Provides prescription benefits to eligible employees and retirees of public sector employers in New York State.

Patient Access Network (PAN) Foundation

www.panfoundation.org

866-316-7263

Gives help with copayments for patients with insurance.

Patient Advocate Foundation

www.patientadvocate.org

800-532-5274

Provides access to care, financial assistance, insurance assistance, job retention assistance, and access to the national underinsured resource directory.

Red Door Community (formerly known as Gilda's Club)

www.reddoorcommunity.org

212-647-9700

A place where people living with cancer find social and emotional support through networking, workshops, lectures, and social activities.

RxHope

www.rxhope.com

877-267-0517

Provides assistance to help people get medicines they have trouble affording.

Triage Cancer

www.triagecancer.org

Provides legal, medical, and financial information and resources for cancer patients and their caregivers.



MSK is a leading provider of orthopedic and oncology care. We are committed to providing the highest quality of care to our patients. For more information, please contact us at 212-639-2000. We are located at 277 Park Ave, New York, NY 10017. For more information, please visit our website at www.mskcc.org.

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About Your Neck Dissection Surgery - Last updated on March 31, 2026

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