PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Alcohol and Your Surgery

This information will help you understand how drinking alcohol can affect your surgery and what we can do to help you.

The amount of alcohol you drink can affect you during and after your surgery. It’s important that you talk with your healthcare providers about how much alcohol you drink so that we can plan your care.

How Alcohol Can Affect Your Surgery

- Stopping alcohol suddenly can cause seizures, delirium, and death. If we know you’re at risk for these complications, we can prescribe medications to help prevent them.
- If you use alcohol regularly, you may be at risk for other complications during and after surgery. These include:
  - Bleeding
  - Infections
  - Heart problems
  - Needing more nursing care
  - Longer hospital stay

What We Will Do
At Memorial Sloan Kettering (MSK) we talk with all patients about their alcohol intake. Your healthcare providers will ask you about the amount of alcohol you drink every day. This includes beer, wine, and liquor. They will also ask you to answer the questions below, which are known as the CAGE questionnaire.

In the last year:

- Have you ever felt you should cut down on your drinking?
- Have people annoyed you by criticizing your drinking?
- Have you ever felt bad or guilty about your drinking?
- Have you ever had a drink first thing in the morning (an eye-opener) to steady your nerves or get rid of a hangover?

**What You Can Do**

- Be honest with your healthcare providers about how much alcohol you drink.
- Try to stop drinking alcohol once your surgery is planned. If you develop a headache, nausea, increased anxiety, or can’t sleep after you stop drinking, tell your doctor right away. These are early signs of alcohol withdrawal and can be treated.
- Tell your healthcare providers if you cannot stop drinking.
- Ask your healthcare providers any questions you have about drinking and surgery. As always, all of your medical information will be kept confidential.
If you have any questions or concerns, talk with a member of your healthcare team. You can reach them Monday through Friday from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM at ______________________. After 5:00 PM, during the weekend, and on holidays, please call_____________________. If there’s no number listed, or you’re not sure, call 212-639-2000.

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