



CARE INSTRUCTIONS

KAISER PERMANENTE

Pancreatic Cancer Surgery: Before Your Surgery

Your Kaiser Permanente Care Instructions

Surgery for pancreatic cancer removes part or all of the pancreas. Other organs might also be removed. You and your doctor will plan your surgery based on your wishes and the stage of the cancer. Every person's treatment plan and surgery are different. Your doctor will tell you what will be removed.

Your doctor may:

- Take out the narrow end (tail) of the pancreas and the spleen. This is called a distal pancreatectomy.
- Take out the whole pancreas, part of the stomach, part of the small intestine, and the bile duct, gallbladder, spleen, and nearby lymph nodes. This is called a total pancreatectomy.
- Take out the thick end (head) of the pancreas. Your doctor may also remove the body of the pancreas, part of the stomach, part of the small intestine, nearby lymph nodes, and the gallbladder and common bile duct. This is called a Whipple procedure.

You will be in the hospital for 1 to 2 weeks after the surgery. You will probably be able to go back to work or your normal routine in about 1 month. It will probably take about 3 months until your strength is back to normal. You may need more treatment for the cancer. This may include chemotherapy or radiation.

You may need to take enzyme supplements. These replace the enzymes the pancreas makes. You may also need to take anti-ulcer pills.

The pancreas makes insulin. So you may develop diabetes after surgery. If this is the case, you may have to check your blood sugar levels and take insulin.

Pancreatic Cancer Surgery: Before Your Surgery (Page 2 of 4)

When you find out that you have cancer, you may feel many emotions and may need some help coping. Seek out family, friends, and counselors for support. You also can do things at home to help you feel better while you go through treatment. Your doctor can guide you to many local resources for support and more information. Call the American Cancer Society (1-800-227-2345) or visit its website at www.cancer.org for more information.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

What happens before surgery?

Surgery can be stressful. This information will help you understand what you can expect. And it will help you safely prepare for surgery.

Preparing for surgery

- Understand exactly what surgery is planned, along with the risks, benefits, and other options.
- Tell your doctors ALL the medicines, vitamins, supplements, and herbal remedies you take. Some of these can increase the risk of bleeding or interact with anesthesia.
- If you take blood thinners, such as warfarin (Coumadin), clopidogrel (Plavix), or aspirin, be sure to talk to your doctor. He or she will tell you if you should stop taking these medicines before your surgery. Make sure that you understand exactly what your doctor wants you to do.
- Your doctor will tell you which medicines to take or stop before your surgery. You may need to stop taking certain medicines a week or more before surgery. So talk to your doctor as soon as you can.
- If you have an advance directive, let your doctor know. It may include a living will and a durable power of attorney for health care. Bring a copy to the hospital. If you don't have one, you may want to prepare one. It lets your doctor and loved ones know your health care wishes. Doctors advise that everyone prepare these papers before any type of surgery or procedure.
- You may be asked to follow a clear liquid diet for several days before surgery. Your doctor will tell you how to do this.
- You may be given antibiotic pills to take.
- You may need to empty your colon with an enema or laxative. Your doctor will tell you how to do this.

What happens on the day of surgery?

- Follow the instructions exactly about when to stop eating and drinking. If you don't, your surgery may be canceled. If your doctor told you to take your medicines on the day of surgery, take them with only a sip of water.
- Take a bath or shower before you come in for your surgery. Do not apply lotions, perfumes, deodorants, or nail polish.
- Do not shave the surgical site yourself.
- Take off all jewelry and piercings. And take out contact lenses, if you wear them.

At the hospital or surgery center

- Bring a picture ID.
- The area for surgery is often marked to make sure there are no errors.
- You will be kept comfortable and safe by your anesthesia provider. You will be asleep during the surgery.
- The surgery usually takes 4 to 8 hours, depending on the type.

Going home

- Be sure you have someone to drive you home. Anesthesia and pain medicine make it unsafe for you to drive.
- You will be given more specific instructions about recovering from your surgery. They will cover things like diet, wound care, follow-up care, driving, and getting back to your normal routine.

When should you call your doctor?

- You have questions or concerns.
- You don't understand how to prepare for your surgery.
- You become ill before the surgery (such as fever, flu, or a cold).
- You need to reschedule or have changed your mind about having the surgery.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <http://www.kp.org>

Enter **L908** in the search box to learn more about "**Pancreatic Cancer Surgery: Before Your Surgery.**"

Pancreatic Cancer Surgery: Before Your Surgery (Page 4 of 4)

© 2006-2016 Healthwise, Incorporated. Care instructions adapted under license by Kaiser Permanente. This care instruction is for use with your licensed healthcare professional. If you have questions about a medical condition or this instruction, always ask your healthcare professional. Healthwise, Incorporated disclaims any warranty or liability for your use of this information.