



Surgery is also called an operation. What type of surgery you have will depend on the size and location of the cancer and if it has spread in your body.

What is surgery?

- It is a common way of removing some cancers but sometimes the whole organ is removed.
- Not all cancers can be removed or reduced with surgery.

Why do I need it?

Because your body cannot fix cancer by itself, doctors may use surgery to:

- cure the cancer
- make the cancer smaller
- reduce any pain caused by the cancer
- reduce symptoms by dealing with local problems caused by the cancer.

Sometimes, the doctor may do surgery to find out more about the cancer. Surgery may be combined with other cancer treatments such as chemotherapy and radiotherapy.

How do I have surgery?

There are different types of surgery for cancer.

You may need to see some doctors, nurses and others involved in your care before your surgery (pre-admission clinic) and have some routine tests (blood tests, breathing test). These tests and the surgery may happen before or at the same time as hospital admission.

You may also be asked to sign consent forms for your surgery.

How long will the surgery take?

Your doctor will tell you how long it will take, but this will depend on:

- the type of cancer you have
- if the cancer has spread to more than one place in your body
- if you need glands removed.

Sometimes these things are decided during surgery.

You will have your surgery at a hospital. This may not be at your local hospital if you need a special team to look after you.

How will the surgery affect my body?

The doctor will help you go to sleep before they start your surgery, by giving you medication. After your surgery, when you wake up, you may be a bit sleepy and have:

- a drip in your arm (to help give you medicine and fluids)
- a tube to drain fluid away
- you may need medicine to help with any pain or sickness
- you may need to do special breathing or other exercises to help you with recovery
- you may feel a bit sick and sleepy.

How long will I be in hospital?

Depending on your surgery, you may stay in hospital for a few days until you feel better. You may have to come back to the hospital for a check-up within a week or two. If you are discharged home, community nurses may be able to visit you at home.

This information has been adapted for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by Menzies School of Health Research in consultation with a Clinical Advisory Group and an Indigenous Consultation Group. Production by Cancer Council.