Hip, Hip, Hooray!

Q

Dear Adia,

I am a strong, active older adult who enjoys traveling with my husband since we both retired 10 years ago. We spend our summers visiting friends and family throughout the United States. When we're not on the go, we have a very active lifestyle with our church and charities in the South Bay. Last week, I began preparing for a necessary surgery on my hip that I have been putting off for months. I can no longer ignore the serious repercussions of my declining health and fear of surgery. I am in pain often and don't feel as physically capable to perform my normal daily activities. What can I do to plan ahead for my needs after surgery? My husband and I have been told we will need to make arrangements for help in the home. What does this look like? I am too young to have a "caregiver" but know recovery will take time. How can I get back on my feet after my surgery? I have always taken care of everyone else.

Many Thanks,

Travel Bug

A

Dear Travel Bug,

Glad to hear that you will not let your pain stop you from LIVING! Given the stress of the surgery, sounds like you have postponed it until now. There is a lot you can do to make sure your surgery and recovery go as smoothly as possible.

1. **Know as much as possible** about the surgery, benefits and risks. If your doctor and the attending nurse are not willing to take the time to discuss the procedure with you, find other professionals.
2. **Bring someone with you** to the pre-surgical appointments to take notes. If this is not possible, bring a tape recorder. You will hear a lot of information in a very short period of time, and it can be hard to digest and remember all the medical terms.
3. **Ask for a post-operative check-list**. For each item, write (1) if you can do it alone, (2) can complete the task with some assistance or (3) cannot complete the task on your own. Use the 1-2-3 rubric.
4. **Pick up post-operative prescriptions filled and other medical supplies *before* the surgery** so that you do not have to wait in line at the pharmacy.
5. **Visualize your recuperation**. Will you be able to move around your house by yourself or will you need to hire help? Will you be able to drive? Ensure you factor in the side effects of the medications that may make driving unsafe, and possibly illegal.
6. **Hire Professional Post-Operative Caregivers** – In an effort to not impose on your friends, neighbors or spouse during a tough, but temporary time, hire professional caregivers whose job duty is to make your life (as well as your family) easier. A professional caregiver will drive you to appointments, prepare your meals, clean your house, communicate with the doctor or nurse for follow-up care procedures, remind you to take your medications and keep track of your meds, assist with bathing or dressing, run errands for you, as well as ensure your recovery home environment is clean from any cross-infection risks commonly found at the hospital.
7. **Do no let the hospital send you home** if you don't feel ready. Ask for help from the Patient Advocate if you feel pressured.

Lastly, **know your rehabilitation and physical therapy plan ahead of time**. Commit to following it. Slacking off on your rehabilitation plan is a sure way of having a botched recovery! Therefore, having a professional post-operative caregiver during this time can ensure your recovery does not fail and ensures you are back on your feet, traveling with your spouse, happily ever after…Hip, Hip, HOORAY!

Yours Truly,

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