

Will Power

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SURGERY AT MY AGE?

Q: Our mom is 80 years old. The doctor proposed surgery to repair an aneurysm. Is it safe to have major surgery at her age?

A: It is possible to have a safe and successful surgery at 80. Here are a few important considerations:

Overall Health: "I'd rather have a patient who is 79 and in great shape than a 49-year old in poor shape," says Dr. Rita Moorman, an anesthesiologist in Los Angeles. Overall physical functioning is a good predictor of healing time and risk of complications.

Diagnosis: Any patient should understand his or her diagnosis. That means having a talk with the doctor(s) about prognosis as well.

Treatment: Understand the treatment options. Is surgery the best option or the only option? Remember, Medicare covers a second opinion.

Informed Consent: Once the diagnosis is accepted and the patient and doctor have agreed on treatment, all patients must sign an informed consent stating he or she understands the risks and benefits of the surgery. For someone with cognitive impairment, their healthcare agent or power of attorney for healthcare may sign the consent.

JOKE OF THE MONTH

A new restaurant just opened in my town by the name of "Karma." They tell me it has no menu. When you go there, you get what you deserve.

- A Prairie Home Companion Website

"Pre-Op" or before the surgery: most patients will have an appointment with the surgeon to discuss how long it will take, who will be in the operating room, what will happen, and how long recovery might take. There are usually labs and other tests that are done prior to a surgery. These are routine and must not be skipped.

Post-Op or after the surgery: you should have a plan for your mom's care. Remember that older folks can take a while to come out of anesthesia, and may take a while to fully regain strength and balance after a few days in bed. Make a plan for help at home, home health and even physical therapy if needed.

One last thing to consider is the emotional aspects of surgery. Your mom might feel nervous about major surgery. Anyone might! All patients, regardless of age, need an opportunity to understand their health needs and to participate in healthcare decisions. Talking it through and supporting her decisions can help alleviate anxiety, which can only help with overall health and well-being.

WILL CALL

Do you or someone you know need our assistance? Call toll-free (888) 994-3863 or wrpioneers.org



N.E.W.s

(N) Nutrition. (E) Exercise. (W) Wellness. Our theme for 2015, mindfulness, includes thinking about nutrition, exercise and wellness as a holistic approach to overall health. This month we look at nutrition and mindfulness.

We have written previously about food choices, fad diets and food trends. Mindfulness is not as much about what you eat, but rather how you eat. The mindfulness movement proposes that how you take in nutrients is as important as what they are. Eating a healthy, varied diet is still important, but the idea behind mindfulness eating is to pay attention while we are eating. What does the food taste like? Am I in the moment while I am eating or multi-tasking and distracted? Can I savor the food I am eating or do I feel guilty for what I have chosen to eat? All of this makes up mindful eating.

Good nutrition is nourishing your body in a way that provides for optimal functioning. Your brain, skin, bones, blood and literally every part of you needs certain nutrients to maximize their ability to meet your overall health needs. For example, diets full of processed foods, sugar, and fat are bad for you because they give short bursts of energy, but do not provide adequate long-term nutrition.

Mindful nutrition easily combines the two ideas, encouraging us to think about what we put in our bodies, the method in which we eat (or drink), and how it fits into our overall health and functioning.

Example: Your body needs hydration every day. Your body will tell you that you need to drink something by notifying your brain of thirst. You can quench that thirst by chugging down a diet soda full of caffeine and preservatives, or by chugging a glass of water. If you pause for the mindfulness of what you are drinking, you will give yourself pause to choose the water. You can think through your nutrition choices when you focus on the process. Thirst means your body needs water. Focus on pouring, drinking and swallowing it. Picture the water moving through your digestive track and being absorbed throughout your body. Know that you made a healthy choice. Your PAF social workers can send you mindful eating information to help keep you motivated and inspired—and remember, forming a new habit takes practice and patience. Be gentle with yourself. If you don't mindfully eat at one meal, start with the next one. At the end of the day, even noticing that you ate something without thinking about it, is mindfulness in and of itself.

Article Sources:

Surgery At My Age? Sources:

"When it Comes to Surgery, Age is Just Part of Equation" by Marge Dwyer Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, March 2013 <http://www.bidmc.org/YourHealth/HealthNotes/Surgery/WhatYouNeedToKnow/>

N.E.W.S. Sources:

"The Connection Between Good Nutrition and Good Cognition" by Alice G. Walton, The Atlantic, Jan 13 2012 <http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2012/01/the-connection-between-good-nutrition-and-good-cognition/251227/>

“ QUOTE OF THE MONTH

You don't climb out of anything as quick as you fall in.

- Will Rogers

