

Preparing for Dental Surgery — Your Pre-Op Checklist

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Description:

Preparing for dental surgery at CSSC Melbourne. Pre-op checklist covering medications, fasting, transport, anxiety management and what to expect.

Details:

Collins Street Specialist Centre — Preparing for Dental Surgery: Your Pre-Operative Checklist

Dental surgery can feel daunting, but good preparation makes a real difference — both on the day and during recovery. Whether you're having wisdom teeth removed, implants placed, periodontal surgery, jaw surgery or another oral procedure, knowing what's expected of you beforehand helps everything go more smoothly.

At Collins Street Specialist Centre (CSSC), we think an informed patient is a confident one. This guide walks you through everything you need to do before your surgery — your medical history, medications, fasting, transport, anxiety management and more.

Your Medical History — Tell Us Everything

Your surgeon needs a complete, accurate picture of your health before any procedure can be safely planned. Please make sure your specialist knows about the following.

Medical Conditions

- **Heart conditions** — heart valve disease, pacemakers, previous heart attack or cardiac surgery - **Blood disorders** — bleeding disorders, anaemia or conditions affecting clotting - **Diabetes** — Type 1 or Type 2, including your current level of blood sugar control - **Respiratory conditions** — asthma, COPD, obstructive sleep apnoea - **Liver or kidney disease** - **Immune system conditions** — autoimmune diseases, HIV/AIDS or current immunosuppressive therapy - **Bone conditions** — osteoporosis, Paget's disease, or any history of bisphosphonate or denosumab treatment (more on this below) - **Previous adverse reactions** to anaesthesia or dental treatment - **Pregnancy** — confirmed or suspected - **Mental health conditions** — including severe anxiety, which may call for additional support or specific sedation planning

Allergies

Please tell your surgeon about all known allergies, including:

- **Medication allergies** — particularly to antibiotics (penicillin, amoxicillin), aspirin, codeine or ibuprofen - **Latex allergy** — we routinely use latex-free alternatives for any patient who needs them - **Local anaesthetic reactions** — if you've previously had an unusual or adverse reaction to dental anaesthesia - **Other allergies** — iodine, adhesive tape or anything else relevant

If you carry an EpiPen due to a known anaphylaxis risk, bring it with you to your appointment.

Current Medications

Bring a complete, up-to-date list of everything you're currently taking, including:

- Prescription medications - Over-the-counter medicines (analgesics, cold and flu preparations, antacids) - Vitamins and supplements (fish oil, vitamin E, turmeric) - Herbal and naturopathic preparations - Recreational substances

Medications to Discuss With Your Surgeon

Some medications can affect surgical bleeding, wound healing or how you respond to anaesthesia. Your surgeon will give you specific instructions based on your situation, but the following categories commonly come up.

Blood Thinners (Anticoagulants and Antiplatelets)

Warfarin, rivaroxaban (Xarelto), apixaban (Eliquis), dabigatran (Pradaxa), clopidogrel (Plavix) and daily low-dose aspirin all affect clotting and may increase bleeding during or after surgery.

****Important:**** Do NOT stop these medications without explicit instruction from your surgeon, in consultation with your prescribing doctor. In many cases, continuing anticoagulation therapy with appropriately modified surgical technique is considerably safer than stopping it and risking a stroke or heart attack.

Your surgeon will liaise with your GP or cardiologist to work out the safest approach for your circumstances.

Bisphosphonates and Denosumab

If you take — or have ever taken — medications for osteoporosis or bone metastases, such as alendronate (Fosamax), risedronate (Actonel), zoledronic acid (Aclasta) or denosumab (Prolia), you must tell your surgeon before any procedure. These drugs can significantly affect jaw bone healing and blood supply, and require careful consideration before extractions or implant placement in particular. The risk of medication-related osteonecrosis of the jaw (MRONJ) needs to be assessed and discussed.

Diabetes Medications

If you take insulin or oral hypoglycaemic agents, your surgeon will give you specific guidance on dosage adjustments for the day of surgery, especially where fasting is required.

Corticosteroids

Regular corticosteroid use — prednisolone, for example — needs to be flagged. Long-term use can affect your body's stress response, and dose adjustments (stress dosing) may be needed around the time of surgery.

Herbal and Natural Supplements

Several common supplements can increase bleeding risk or interact with anaesthetic agents:

- ****Fish oil / omega-3 fatty acids**** — may increase bleeding tendency - ****Vitamin E**** — may increase bleeding in higher doses - ****Turmeric / curcumin**** — may affect platelet function and clotting - ****Ginkgo biloba**** — may increase bleeding risk - ****St John's wort**** — known to interact with a range of medications, including anaesthetic agents - ****Garlic supplements**** — may affect platelet function - ****Ginseng**** — may affect blood glucose and clotting

Your surgeon will advise whether any of these should be stopped before surgery — typically 7 to 14 days beforehand.

Eating and Drinking Guidelines

Fasting requirements depend on the type of anaesthesia planned for your procedure.

Local Anaesthesia Only

If your procedure is being done under local anaesthetic alone — numbing injections, no sedation — there are generally no fasting requirements. Eating a light meal beforehand is actually encouraged; it helps keep your blood sugar stable and reduces the chance of feeling faint or lightheaded during treatment.

If you tend to feel nauseous during dental procedures, you may prefer to avoid eating immediately before your appointment.

Intravenous Sedation or General Anaesthesia

If your procedure involves IV sedation or general anaesthesia, strict fasting rules apply:

- **No food** for at least 6 hours before your scheduled procedure time - **No clear fluids** (water, black tea, black coffee without milk) for at least 2 hours before - **No milk or milk-based drinks** for at least 6 hours before - **No chewing gum or confectionery** on the day of surgery

These aren't just precautions — they're clinically critical. An empty stomach substantially reduces the risk of pulmonary aspiration (inhaling stomach contents during sedation), which can be a serious, life-threatening complication. If you haven't followed the fasting instructions, your procedure will need to be postponed.

Your surgeon's team will give you fasting instructions specific to your procedure and the planned anaesthesia.

Transport — Getting to and From Your Appointment

Local Anaesthesia Only

If your procedure is under local anaesthetic only, with no sedation, you can generally drive yourself. That said, if you think you might feel anxious or uncomfortable afterwards, arranging a lift is a sensible precaution.

Intravenous Sedation or General Anaesthesia

If you're having any form of sedation, the following apply without exception:

- **You must have a responsible adult** to drive you home, or to travel with you in a taxi or rideshare - **You cannot drive for at least 24 hours** after sedation - **You cannot operate machinery**, sign legal documents or make significant financial decisions for 24 hours after sedation - **You should not be left alone** for the first several hours after your procedure - **Arrange for a responsible adult to stay with you** overnight if at all possible

Sort out your transport well before the day of surgery. If you arrive for a sedation procedure without appropriate transport arranged, your procedure may need to be rescheduled.

What to Wear

Comfort and practicality are what matter on surgery day:

- **Loose, comfortable clothing** — choose a top with short sleeves or sleeves that roll up easily if you're having IV sedation, to allow straightforward venous access - **Avoid tight necklines or turtlenecks** — unobstructed access to your neck area may be needed - **Flat, comfortable footwear** — you may feel mildly unsteady after sedation - **Remove nail polish from at least one fingernail** — your surgeon or anaesthetist may use a pulse oximeter (a small finger clip) to monitor your oxygen levels during sedation - **Leave valuables at home** — keep jewellery minimal and avoid bringing anything you'd be worried about losing - **Remove facial piercings** in or near the surgical site where possible

Managing Pre-Surgery Anxiety

Dental anxiety is common and completely understandable. Many patients — including those who've had surgery before — feel some apprehension before oral procedures. The following strategies can help.

In the Days Before Surgery

- **Ask questions** — understanding your procedure in detail takes away a lot of the fear. Please contact our team with any concerns, however small they seem. - **Write down your worries** — putting your concerns on paper (or in a note on your phone) can make them feel more manageable, and gives you something concrete to raise with your surgeon. - **Practise relaxation techniques** — diaphragmatic breathing, mindfulness or progressive muscle relaxation in the days before surgery can genuinely reduce anxiety. - **Prioritise sleep** — rest well beforehand. Fatigue makes anxiety worse and reduces your body's resilience. - **Cut back on caffeine** on the day of surgery — it can amplify anxiety, raise your heart rate and leave you feeling jittery before a procedure.

Sedation Options at CSSC

We offer a range of sedation options for patients who experience anxiety or who simply prefer a more comfortable experience:

- **Nitrous oxide (happy gas)** — a mild inhaled anxiolytic that produces relaxation while you stay conscious and responsive. Effects wear off within minutes of stopping. - **Oral sedation** — a tablet taken before your appointment to reduce pre-procedural anxiety. - **Intravenous (IV) sedation** — medications given through an IV cannula that produce deep relaxation. You remain semi-conscious and able to respond to simple instructions, but are unlikely to remember the procedure. - **General anaesthesia** — for complex or lengthy procedures, or for patients with significant anxiety, full general anaesthesia can be administered in a hospital setting by a specialist anaesthetist.

Your surgeon will discuss the most appropriate option during your consultation, well before your surgery date.

On the Day

- **Arrive early** — rushing makes stress worse. Give yourself extra time to park, check in and settle before your procedure. - **Bring headphones and music** — calming music, an audiobook or a familiar podcast can be a genuine distraction in the waiting room and during the procedure. - **Bring a support person** — having someone familiar nearby provides real reassurance. - **Tell your team how you're feeling** — let your surgeon and surgical assistants know if you're anxious. Our team is experienced with nervous patients and can adjust their approach to help you feel more at ease.

Anaesthesia — What to Expect

The type of anaesthesia recommended for your procedure depends on its nature and complexity, as well as your preferences and medical history.

Local Anaesthesia

The most common form of dental anaesthesia. Your surgeon injects a local anaesthetic near the surgical site, blocking pain while you remain fully awake. Modern local anaesthetic techniques are highly reliable, and most patients report only a brief, mild sensation during the injection itself.

Local Anaesthesia With Sedation

A combined approach where local anaesthetic handles pain control while sedation provides relaxation. This is the most common approach for procedures like wisdom tooth removal and implant placement at CSSC.

General Anaesthesia

For complex or lengthy procedures — jaw surgery or staged implant reconstruction, for example — general anaesthesia may be used in a hospital setting. A specialist anaesthetist manages anaesthesia throughout, and you'll be completely unconscious.

If your procedure requires general anaesthesia in hospital, you'll receive a separate pre-operative information pack from that facility with specific instructions.

CSSC's Surgical Facilities

Collins Street Specialist Centre has contemporary surgical facilities built for both clinical precision and patient comfort:

- **Dedicated surgical suites** — purpose-built operating rooms with advanced surgical equipment - **On-site 3D imaging** — cone beam computed tomography (CBCT) scanning for detailed surgical planning - **Intraoperative monitoring** — pulse oximetry, continuous blood pressure monitoring and capnography during all sedation procedures - **Emergency preparedness** — fully stocked emergency equipment and medications, with a trained team ready to manage any adverse event - **Infection control and sterilisation** — rigorous protocols that meet and exceed Australian regulatory requirements - **Experienced surgical team** — our oral and maxillofacial surgeons are supported by trained, credentialed surgical assistants throughout every procedure

Your Pre-Operative Checklist — At a Glance

Use this checklist to make sure you're fully prepared for your surgery date.

One Week Before Surgery

- ☐ Confirm your appointment date, time and location - ☐ Arrange transport home — particularly if you're having sedation - ☐ Discuss any medication changes with your surgeon and GP - ☐ Stop any supplements your surgeon has advised against (typically 7–14 days before surgery) - ☐ Fill any prescriptions your surgeon has provided (antibiotics, analgesics) - ☐ Arrange time off work if needed - ☐ Arrange help with children or dependants for the day of surgery and your recovery

The Day Before Surgery

- ☐ Confirm your transport arrangements are in place - ☐ Prepare comfortable, loose-fitting clothing for the following day - ☐ Set out your medications, referral letter and insurance/Medicare cards - ☐ Prepare a comfortable recovery area at home (extra pillows for elevation, soft foods and drinks on hand) - ☐ Get a good night's sleep

On the Day of Surgery

- ☐ Follow fasting instructions if they apply to your procedure - ☐ Take any medications your surgeon has specifically told you to take, with a small sip of water only - ☐ Wear comfortable clothing with short or easily rolled-up sleeves - ☐ Remove contact lenses if having sedation, and bring glasses instead - ☐ Leave valuables at home - ☐ Bring your medication list, referral letter, insurance card and Medicare card - ☐ Arrive at least 15 minutes early to complete any outstanding paperwork - ☐ Bring your support person

After Your Surgery

Your surgeon will give you detailed post-operative instructions specific to your procedure. In general:

- **Rest** for the remainder of the day after your procedure - **Apply ice packs** as directed to keep swelling and bruising down in the first day or two - **Take prescribed medications** exactly as instructed — including completing any antibiotic course in full - **Eat soft foods** and avoid putting pressure on the surgical site when chewing - **Avoid strenuous physical activity** for as long as your surgeon recommends - **Attend your follow-up appointment** — post-operative review lets your surgeon check healing and pick up any concerns early

Contact Us With Any Questions or Concerns

If you have questions while preparing for surgery — or if anything changes between your consultation and your surgery date (new medications, illness, suspected pregnancy) — please contact our team promptly.

Your safety comes first, and we'd always rather address a concern early than deal with it on the day.

Phone: (03) 9654 6979 **Location:** Level 4, 220 Collins Street, Melbourne VIC 3000

Preparing thoroughly for dental surgery at CSSC — because a well-informed patient is a confident one.
