

12 Questions to Ask Your Doctor

Dr. Asher Larmie, <https://www.fatdoctor.co.uk>



Challenge Your Surgeon: 12 Questions They Don't Want You to Ask

Being told you can't have surgery because of your BMI? These questions will help you get the facts and challenge discriminatory denials.

Getting Clear About YOUR Individual Risk

1. **"What is MY specific risk for this procedure, not the population average?"**
Follow up with: "How did you calculate this for me personally?"
 2. **"Can you provide the absolute risk numbers, not just relative risk?"** "If you say I'm 'twice as likely' to have a complication, what are the actual percentages?"
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Recommended Evidence

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Demanding Evidence

3. "Which specific study are you basing this risk assessment on, and are you accounting for my other health factors beyond BMI?" "Can I see that study? How similar were those patients to me, and how do my blood work, and other health markers factor into this decision?"

4. "What about the obesity paradox research showing better outcomes in higher BMI patients?" "Have you reviewed studies showing superior survival in all forms of surgery for patients with higher BMIs?"

5. "What is your duty of care to me as your patient?" "Can you remind me of your ethical and legal obligations when making treatment decisions?"

Exposing Contradictions

6. "What are the risks of delaying this procedure?" "How does that compare to the surgical risks you're citing?"

7. "If you're recommending weight loss first, what evidence shows this improves outcomes?" "Can you cite studies showing pre-operative weight loss reduces complications?"

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8. "Would you perform bariatric surgery on someone my size?" "How do you reconcile recommending higher-risk weight loss surgery while denying lower-risk necessary surgery?"

9. "How will my underlying condition progress while I attempt weight loss?"
"What if weight loss takes 2 years? What happens to my [joint/condition] during that time?"

Asserting Your Rights & Creating Documentation

10. "Are you respecting my autonomy by allowing me to make an informed choice about my healthcare, or are you making the decision for me?" "Shouldn't I be able to accept these risks if I understand them?"

11. "Can you document in my chart the specific medical reasons for this delay?"
"I'd like the medical justification in writing."

12. "Can you refer me to another surgeon for a second opinion?" "Will you provide my records to another specialist?"

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Red Flags in Surgeon Responses

▶ **Be concerned if your surgeon:**

- Cannot provide specific studies or evidence for their risk assessment
- Uses vague terms like "too risky" without actual numbers or percentages
- Refuses to discuss your individual health factors beyond BMI
- Cannot explain their ethical obligations or duty of care to you
- Cannot justify why delaying surgery is safer than proceeding
- Recommends bariatric surgery while denying other procedures
- Refuses to document their reasoning in your medical chart
- Won't provide referrals for second opinions
- Shows discomfort when asked about evidence-based decision making

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Remember Your Rights

👤 **You have the right to:**

- **Informed consent**, not paternalistic decisions
- **Individualized risk assessment** based on your specific health profile
- **Multiple medical opinions** from different specialists
- **Challenge discriminatory policies** that aren't based on evidence
- **Accept reasonable risks** for your own body and health
- **Medical decisions based on evidence**, not bias

Important: Document everything. Keep records of these conversations, ask for written explanations, and don't accept "policy" as a substitute for actual medical evidence.

Remember: You are your own best advocate. These questions will help ensure you receive care based on evidence, not discrimination.

Fighting for your right to surgery shouldn't be this exhausting.

If asking these questions reveals weight bias or dismissive responses, you don't have to navigate the challenge process alone.