These notes give an overall guide to your procedure. You may see some differences in the details of your treatment, since it is tailored to suit your own condition.
WHAT HAPPENS BEFORE THE OPERATION?

WHAT SHOULD I DO BEFORE THE OPERATION?

WHAT ARE THE ANAESTHETIC RISKS INVOLVED?

LUMBAR SYMPATHECTOMY:

Complications after lumbar sympathectomy are rare but include haematoma formation in the wound which may require drainage or the development of an ilius which is where the intestine stops functioning for a short while after the operation. This would be considered a normal post-operative event and would be watched carefully by your doctor over the next day or two before allowing you to eat again. Wound infection is very uncommon.

WHAT ARE THE ANAESTHETIC RISKS INVOLVED?

You can discuss the type of anaesthetic you will have with your anaesthetist and also the possible complications that may occur.

WHAT SHOULD I DO BEFORE THE OPERATION?

You should not eat or drink anything for at least six hours before your operation. However, you should take all your regular medication as usual on the day. Your surgeon may want you to stop certain medication such as dispirin, warfarin, or other blood thinning medicines before the operation.

WHAT HAPPENS BEFORE THE OPERATION?

Please report to the hospital reception on time for your admission. Please bring along all the documents that may be required such as your medical aid card, ID and contact details. If you are not a member of a medical aid you will be required to pay a deposit or to sign an indemnity form. As far as possible we will try to advise you about hospital costs before your admission. It may be best to complete some of the documentation beforehand at the hospital pre-admission clinic to save time on the day of your admission.

When you arrive in the ward, you will be welcomed by the nurses or the receptionist and will have your details checked. Some basic tests will be done such as pulse, temperature, blood pressure and urine examination. You will be asked for more details from the surgeon or from the nurses. In an adult, the operation area may need to be shaved to remove excess hair. You may be issued with compression stockings that will help prevent blood lots in your legs. If you are having a general anaesthetic, the anaesthetist who will be giving your anaesthetic will interview and examine you and he may put up a drip or prescribe some medication to help you relax. You will be taken on a trolley to the operating suite by the staff. You will be wearing a cotton gown, wedding rings will be fastened with tape and removable dentures will be left on the ward. There will be several checks on your details on the way to the operating theatre where your anaesthetist will begin.

HOW LONG DOES THE OPERATION TAKE?

Usually about 90 minutes

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I WAKE UP?

After the operation is completed you will be transferred back to the ward. Although you will be conscious a minute or two after the operation ends, you are unlikely to remember anything until you are back in your bed on the ward. You may have a moderate amount of pain, especially when breathing, and a sore throat.

WILL I HAVE PAIN?

Some pain may be present, but this should be controlled to a level of mild discomfort with the painkillers that are prescribed. Ask the nursing staff for medication if you have pain.

HOW SOON AFTER THE OPERATION CAN I EAT?

Almost immediately after a Thoracoscopic sympathectomy. After a Lumbar Sympathectomy, it may be a day or two before your bowels are recovered enough to take in food.

HOW SOON AFTER THE OPERATION CAN I GET OUT OF BED?

You will start to mobilise and walk the day after surgery. A physiotherapist will assist initially. You will receive intensive chest physio.

HOW LONG WILL I STAY IN THE HOSPITAL?

Usually 1 to 4 days

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I AM DISCHARGED FROM THE WARD?

Your surgeon will determine when you are ready to go home. You will be given some medication for pain and you may also need to take antibiotics for a few days after you go home. You will be given instructions on the dressings and how to care for the wounds. You will also get an appointment for your follow-up in the surgeon’s rooms. You should ask for a sick certificate if you need this for your employer.

WHAT SHOULD I BE AWARE OF WHEN I GET HOME?

If there is increasing wound pain or swelling, if you notice fresh blood on the dressings, you must contact the surgeon immediately. If you become suddenly short of breath, call immediately.

HOW SOON CAN I START EXERCISE?

You should not exert yourself much until your surgeon allows you to. You should walk as much as you can every day.

HOW SOON CAN I DRIVE A CAR?

10 days

HOW LONG WILL I BE OFF WORK?

Usually between 7 to 10 days.

WHAT ABOUT PAYMENT?

The procedure and its associated costs will have been discussed with you, and a quote provided. Where procedures need to be unexpectedly altered during the course of the procedure, the fee may change. Similarly, emergency procedures may incur an additional cost.

Surgeons are highly trained, highly skilled professionals and throughout your care a member of the practice is available to attend to you 24 hours a day. In return we expect prompt payment of your account.

We do not submit accounts to medical aids.