

Stella, the Ward Nurse, prepares Mrs. Johnson for her operation by telling her about the pre-operative routine.

Nurse: Hello, Mrs. Johnson. I'm Stella. I'll be looking after you today. Have you settled in yet?

Patient: Yes, dear. I've met all the ladies in my room. I just have to wait for the operation now, don't I?

Nurse: Yes. I'm going to look at the operation list when it comes out later today so I can tell you where you are on the list. I just need to go through some pre-op things with you. Is that okay?

Patient: Yes, that's fine. Um, I've brought my letter from the doctor for you. Here it is.

Nurse: Thanks, Mrs. Johnson. Right, let me see. First, I'll check your consent form. Is that your signature?

Patient: Yes dear. I signed it in the doctor's surgery before I came to the hospital. He explained all about the operation to me.

Nurse: Good. Now, I'll get you to take off your nail polish later today so the anaesthetist will be able to see your nail beds.

Patient: Oh.

Nurse: And you'll also need a shower with this antiseptic wash. Here's a sachet of the wash for you. Just wash all over using the antiseptic wash as you would with soap.

Patient: All right. I'll do that tonight before I go to bed.

Nurse: Great. I'll get you to have another shower with the antiseptic wash in the morning. I'll give you another sachet in a while.

Patient: Will my tummy be shaved before the operation?

Nurse: No, it won't. We used to shave the operation area but the policy has changed now.

Patient: Oh.

Nurse: Best practice is that if it doesn't interfere with the surgery, then the area is not shaved.

Patient: Oh good. I remember having it done many years ago when I had an operation. It wasn't very comfortable.

Nurse: I know what you mean. A lot of people used to complain about it. Now, I see that you've been on a low-residue diet for a few days. I'm going to order you clear fluids for today. That means you'll just be on liquids today. Then you'll be Nil By Mouth after midnight. I've got the Nil By Mouth sign here which I'll put up a little later. It just reminds the kitchen staff not to leave you a meal.

Patient: Oh yes. That means I won't be able to eat or drink anything after midnight, will I?

Nurse: No, you won't. The reason for this is that when you have an anaesthetic, your muscles relax. If you have anything in your stomach it could rise up into your throat and you might inhale it.

Patient: Oh, I see. I certainly don't want that to happen.

Nurse: No, not at all. I'll get you to take a special bowel preparation drink later to clean out your bowel. You'll also need a small enema to help you open your bowels. This is so that when the surgeon operates, there is less chance of contamination from the bowel contents.

Patient: It's quite a business, isn't it?

Nurse: Yes, it does take a bit of preparation. Oh, I'm going to do one last thing.

Patient: I hope it won't taste awful.

Nurse: (laughs) No, it's not anything like that. I'm going to get you some anti-embolic stockings. They're very firm stockings; you put them on to support your legs. You wear them to prevent deep vein thrombosis – DVTs – or clots in your veins.

Patient: That's all right then. They won't be too much of a bother, I'm sure.

Answer the Following Questions:

- What pre-op hygiene instructions does the nurse give Mrs. Johnson?
- Why isn't she allowed to eat or drink before the operation?
- Why does she have to wear the stockings?