



ALL surgeries come with dangers – so think twice before going under the knife, especially for the following four elective operations, say experts.

1. SPINAL FUSION FOR STENOSIS – Spinal stenosis occurs with aging and involves the narrowing of the spinal cord, sometimes causing intense pain. Fusion is a procedure where surgeons place bone grafts in the spine to weld together two or more vertebrae to prevent motion and stop pain.

But Dr. Bal Rajagopalan of Beverly Hills warns, “Complications such as bleeding and nerve damage can arise.” Alternatives include physical therapy, massage, cortisone injections, acupuncture and medication.

2. STENTS FOR STABLE ANGINA – Surgeons use tiny mesh tubes to prop open arteries that carry blood to the heart. This procedure can be lifesaving for heart attack patients, but for stable angina – chest pain caused by stress or exertion – lifestyle changes may be preferable.

Dr. Richard Stein, spokesperson for the American Heart Association, recommends changes in diet and exercise or taking statins to lower cholesterol.

3. HYSTERECTOMY FOR UTERINE FIBROIDS – About 600,000 American women undergo hysterectomies to remove the uterus every year – and most operations are unnecessary, say experts. The surgery should be used when cancer is diagnosed – not to treat heavy bleeding or pain caused by uterine fibroids, benign growths on the uterine wall.

“The only time it’s justified is if there’s uncontrollable bleeding or the fibroid is so large, it’s pressing on vital organs,” says Dr. Mary Jane Minkin, a professor at Yale University

Many doctors recommend non-surgical treatments before resorting to going under the knife



FOUR OPERATIONS YOU SHOULD AVOID

School of Medicine. Studies show complications are common, including incontinence and increased risk of heart disease and cancer.

4. KNEE ARTHROSCOPY FOR OSTEOARTHRITIS – In this procedure, a surgeon places a tiny camera in the knee, then inserts small instruments through other incisions to repair torn or aging cartilage.

But Dr. Richard Berger, a leading orthopedic surgeon from Chicago, says it’s ineffective for advanced osteoarthritis.

“Patients are often no better off than they’d have been by treating the condition with exercise and medication,” he says.

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Update

Coffee fights bowel cancer

+YOU can slash your risk of lethal bowel cancer by up to 40 percent if you drink six cups of coffee each day, a new U.S. National Cancer Institute study says. People who down four daily cups lower their risk of the deadly disease by 15 percent – but according to the researchers, tea drinkers enjoy no protection. Doctors say bowel cancer’s high mortality rate is directly related to a lack of early detection.

Drug eases chronic cough

+MEDICATION commonly used to control epileptic seizures and pain also eases difficult-to-treat chronic coughing, say Australian researchers. Doctors say the drug gabapentin works by suppressing the “cough center” of the brain, quelling constant hacking attacks that affect about 15 percent of all people. Those with the condition feel the need to cough without real reason because brain neurons fire unnecessarily.

Baldness cure can cause impotence

+A DRUG that cures hairlessness can also cause erectile dysfunction, says a study from the George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences. Men using the drug finasteride have reported sexual side effects including a reduction in libido that can continue even after they stop taking treatment for their bald heads. Researchers are concerned the sexual damage could even be permanent.