How to Prepare Your Child for Surgery

Attending our Surgery Express Orientation Program is one of the best ways to prepare your child for his/her surgery.

All children should be told:
- They are going to the hospital
- They will be having an operation
- Basic information about what will happen to them

Explain to your child in a way that he/she will understand, what will happen while he/she is in the hospital.

Be honest when answering questions.

Explain to your child that he/she will not feel, hear, or see anything during the operation, because of the special medicine that will make him/her sleep. Most children need to know they will not wake up during the operation, but will wake up after it is over.

Explain to your child where the operation will take place on their body.

Be honest about what will hurt and tell your child that the pain will go away.

Let your child pack. Children scheduled for surgery often feel a lack of control. By packing their own suitcase children are able to exert control. Have your child pack a favorite toy, teddy bear or blanket.

Encourage your child to talk about the operation and ask questions. Books with stories about hospitals can help your child understand more about their hospital experience. Include brothers and sisters in planning activities and discussions about their sibling’s surgery and/or hospitalization.

Infants
- Do everything you can to reduce your own anxiety. Find out as much as you can about what to expect when you bring your baby to the hospital.

Toddlers (1-3)
- Tell your child about the surgery 1-3 days in advance.
- Allow him to choose a stuffed animal, blanket or favorite toy to bring to the hospital.

Preschoolers (4-5)
- Tell your child 3-5 days in advance. Your child will be curious and want to know what to expect.
- Preschoolers sometimes assume that their operation is punishment for being bad. They need to be reassured this is not true.
- Children may fear that their body parts will be hurt or lost during surgery. They need simple explanations of what will be fixed.
- Separation from parents is frightening. Children need to be reassured they will be going home after surgery.
- Reading books about the hospital and using medical play kits are great ways to help preschoolers.

School-age (6-12)
- Begin preparing at least a week ahead of time.
- Children worry that surgery will change the way they look.
- School-age children also worry about waking up during surgery.
- They need details about events, before, during and after the surgery. Explain about the special sleep medicine. They will not feel, hear or see anything during the operation.

Adolescents (13 and older)
- Teens fear their body will be damaged and are concerned about how they will look and feel after surgery.
- Peer groups are very important. Adolescents may be concerned about how their appearance after surgery may affect friendships.
- Adolescents strive to be independent and surgery may make them feel dependent.
- Include teens in all discussion and decisions regarding their surgery. Going to the hospital can be a stressful time for you, your child, and your family. Knowing what will happen and getting ready ahead of time can help.

Going Home
Before you go home, you will be given individualized instructions and information on:
- Personal care
- Diet
- Daily activities
- Medication
- Incision care
- What to watch for
- Your surgeon’s phone number
- Follow-up appointment
- Returning to school

Pain Management
Learning as much as you can about the operation and the amount of pain to expect afterwards will help you prepare for the surgery and recovery experience. The nurses and doctors want your child to be comfortable and will ask if anything hurts. Medicine to reduce pain may be given intravenously, orally or rectally. Your child’s surgeon should discuss pain management options with you prior to surgery. The Pain Team is also available for consultations.
Programs offered by Children’s Hospital of Michigan

The following education programs are recommended to help prepare for surgery. To decide which will be most helpful and to make the required reservations, call the child life specialist at (313) 993-0899.

- **Surgery Express:** A “train ride” is offered through the surgical suite for children ages 4-11 and their parents. The tour helps you and your child become more comfortable with the upcoming surgical experience. This tour is especially designed to ease your child’s fears and to enhance your ability to be supportive.

- **Individual Tours:** can be arranged with the Same Day Surgery child life specialist. These tours are great for children under the age of 4, adolescents and children who will be staying overnight. For children who are going to be admitted the tour includes a visit to a patient room, the playroom and library.

- **A Video Visit to Surgery:** Children’s Hospital of Michigan has produced a video to help children become more comfortable about their visit to the hospital. Play kits are available by mail. Kit includes surgical hat, booties, mask, coloring book and other items.

- **Medical Play Kits:** Playing with medical items helps children become more comfortable about their visit to the hospital. Play kits are available by mail. Kit includes surgical hat, booties, mask, coloring book and other items.

- **Books:** Reading together is a great way to help children learn about surgery. Recommended books are:
  - *Let’s Talk About When You Have to Have Your Tonsils Out* by Melanie Aepel Gordon
  - *Chris Gets Ear Tubes* by Betty Pace
  - *Let’s Talk About Going to the Hospital* by Marianne Johnston
  - *Franklin Goes to the Hospital* by Paulette Bourgeois
  - *When Molly was in the Hospital: A Book for Brothers and Sisters of Hospitalized Children,* by Debbie Duncan
  - *Blueberry Eyes* by Monica Driscoll Beatty

- **Call-a-Child Life Specialist:** For information about preparation programs, please contact the Same Day Surgery child life specialist at 313-993-0899.

**Preoperative Instructions**

Parents please ensure your child:
- Does not eat or drink after midnight unless otherwise instructed. This includes candy and gum.
- Takes a bath or shower and has long hair tied back
- Does not wear jewelry, nail polish, makeup or contact lenses
- Wears loose comfortable clothing

**Prior to Surgery**

- If your insurance requires a referral, the parent is responsible to arrange with the primary care provider for the referral prior to surgery.
- An admitting representative will call to verify insurance information and make arrangements for payment of copay/deductible.
- An anesthesia representative will call the day before surgery with questions about your child’s health, instructions about eating and the time to arrive at the hospital. Please discuss any medications your child is taking with the anesthesia representative.
- If you are traveling from a long distance and your child does not eat or drink, please call the anesthesia department at (313) 745-5466 before coming to the hospital since surgery may have to be postponed.

**At the Hospital**

Most people have questions about surgery. Please feel free to tell your nurse or physician if there is something you don’t understand or want more information about. The anesthesia team will meet with you and your child before surgery to explain and decide on the best plan.

- Your child may receive medicine for relaxation before surgery.
- After discussion with your anesthesiologist, one parent may be allowed to stay until your child is asleep.
- Your child may be comfortable going into the operating room awake.
- For most children, laboratory tests are unnecessary.
- Papers are available in the Surgical Family Waiting Room for your convenience. It is expected that you will remain in the hospital during your child’s surgery.
- The family waiting room features Wi-Fi access and televisions. It is expected that you remain in the hospital during your child’s surgery.

**What to Bring**

- Picture identification for registration
- Current guardianship/custody papers if you are not the biological parent
- Extra set of clothing including underwear and/or diapers
- Favorite bottle or child cup for after surgery
- Special stuffed animal, blanket, or pillow
- A pacifier

**Day of Surgery**

Carefully follow instructions regarding fluid intake, if allowed, on the day of surgery. This is important because any food or fluids in the stomach during surgery can cause severe complications. If, by accident, your child does eat or drink, please call the anesthesia department at (313) 745-5466 before coming to the hospital since surgery may have to be postponed.

- Please attempt to make child care arrangements for siblings.
- If siblings ages 2 1/2 – 12 have to accompany you to the hospital, Jack’s Tree House is a free child care service provided from 8:00 a.m. – 6:30 p.m. located on the 1st floor of the hospital. Children must be potty trained and can stay for a maximum of a two hour time slot.
- Please allow extra time for travel to the hospital during rush hour traffic and construction.
- Call MDOT at (248) 483-5100 for construction update.
- Park in the attached structure or use valet service.
- Four visitors are allowed to accompany the child on the day of surgery.

**Return**

A pacifier

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