

FOR PARENTS/CAREGIVERS:

Tips to Help Your Child For Surgery:

You are the best person to help your child. While it may be hard at times, try to be calm and reassuring. Give frequent hugs and praise. Provide comfort and distract your child with stories and pictures. **Other things you can do:**

- **Be patient with your child.** Children may react to stressful events by crying, having temper tantrums, whining, clinging and acting out in frustration. These feelings and behaviors are common but often short-term.
- **Help your child understand what is going on.** Use simple words that he or she can understand. If your child needs to go through something that may be painful, be honest about the fact that it may feel uncomfortable, but also explain how it will help his/her body. Then talk with your child about ways to make the experience easier such as asking questions, sitting on a parent's lap or watching a movie.
- **Let your child talk about worries or feelings.** Remind your child that it's OK to be worried or cry, but also help him/her talk about feelings. Younger children are often better at expressing their feelings through play, drawing or story-telling. Listen to your child, and help your child know that these feelings are normal.
- **Help your child see the hospital staff as helpers.** Remind your child that the staff try very hard to help children feel better.
- **Encourage your child to ask his/her own questions to the doctors or nurses.** Young children may often be quieter in a strange setting. If they hesitate to ask questions, tell them that you can ask for them. It's important for you as a parent to have correct information, so please ask your own questions, too.
- **Take care of yourself.** If you are worried, upset or not getting sleep, it will be harder to help your child. Don't be afraid to ask friends or family for help. Talk about your worries with other adults, such as family, friends, a counselor, a member of the clergy or your doctor.
- **Tell us if your child has special needs.** If your child has special needs, we suggest you call a child life specialist to make a custom plan to help your child get ready for surgery. To learn more, call the Child Life Services team at 847-570-2831 to speak to one of our child life specialists.

HOW CHILD LIFE SPECIALISTS CAN HELP YOUR FAMILY GET READY FOR SURGERY:

Child life specialists are trained professionals to help children and families understand and cope with surgeries, procedures and hospital admissions.

A child life specialist can help patients and families in these ways:

- Prepare children, teens and families for surgery and hospital experiences by explaining step-by-step in a developmentally appropriate way what to expect and what will happen while at the hospital.
- Support the emotional and educational needs of the patient, parents, siblings and other family members.
- Reduce stress and worry by providing distraction and promoting positive coping skills during medical procedures.
- Offer age-appropriate and safe play activities.
- Help patients develop ways to cope with fear, worry, separation and adjustment to the hospital, specifically with the surgery experience.
- Assist special needs patients and their families by making plans and strategies to help them cope with being in the hospital.

If you would be interested in speaking with one of our child life specialists, please call 847-570-2831 or email kbeyer@northshore.org if you would like to schedule a virtual consult/tour prior to your child's scheduled procedure.

CHILD-FRIENDLY SURGERY TIPS

Infants:

Maintain routine. In preparation for surgery, keep the routine as consistent as possible.

Bring comfort items from home. (Blankets, pacifiers, stuffed animals, favorite toys). Separation anxiety is very common at this age. Anything from home can help provide additional comfort for them the day of surgery.

Prepare for the time before surgery. The waiting period before surgery when the baby/toddler cannot eat or drink can be tough. Bring favorite and familiar toys and use this time to spend some extra time snuggling before the procedure.

Be Calm. Infants/toddlers can sense your anxiety and it may cause them to get upset, too. There is a playroom on the Pediatric Unit that you may use before surgery. Your calming presence can help relieve their anxiety.

Toddlers/Preschoolers:

Talk to your child before surgery. At this stage, we suggest preparing them one day for each year of age. So, if your child is 2 years old, start talking about their surgery two days prior to the procedure. Briefly explain to them they'll go to sleep for surgery and assure them they won't feel anything at all. Shop for their favorite popsicles at the store the day before to get them excited!

Use simple words. Try "surgery" room instead of operating room and "surgery" sleep or "sleepy/sleep medicine" instead of general anesthesia.

Bring familiar, comfort items from home. Bring a familiar toy (stuffed animal or doll) to stay with them during surgery. This helps give them a sense of control over their environment.

Play with a medical play kit and show them how to use simple medical equipment. Kids learn through play, so pretend their teddy bear/stuffed animal is going to surgery. Listening to the heartbeat with a play stethoscope, using blood pressure cuff (an arm hug or squeeze) or simply placing a bandage on the surgery site is a great place to start. Begin discussing "surgery sleep." Explain that they won't feel or hear anything during surgery sleep.

Read books about the hospital. Find an age-appropriate book about going to the hospital for surgery. "Curious George Goes to the Hospital, A Sleepy Tale: My First Surgery, Maisy Goes to the Hospital, At The Hospital, i.e.

School-Age Children:

Talk to your child a week or two before surgery. Begin discussing why they are having surgery. Explain there is a doctor who makes sure they stay asleep during surgery and remind them they won't feel anything while sleeping.

Be honest and reassuring. This will also help build a trusting relationship between you and your child. It's normal for children to become quiet, feel angry or have many different questions in anticipation of surgery. Encourage them to talk about how he or she may be feeling. Emphasize that the child hasn't done anything wrong. Many at this age may feel that surgery is a punishment or feel as if it is their fault.

Check their level of understanding. School-age children will often listen to you, but that doesn't mean they always understand completely or know the right questions to ask. Allow your child an opportunity to tell you what will happen when they go to the hospital. Explain the benefits and positives of surgery. "Once your leg heals, you'll be able to run and play with your friends again or play soccer again."

Teens:

Use correct words and give honest information. It's appropriate for teens to want to research their surgery as soon as it's scheduled. Ask your physician for reliable books or websites to find accurate information.

Include your teen in plans and decisions. Encourage them to make a list of questions and participate in discussions with physicians.

Discuss a coping plan. Do they enjoy music? If so, make a surgery play-list with their favorite songs to listen to before and after the procedure. Do they benefit from deep breathing? Practice this at home when they're calm so they know how to do it in times of stress. It's important for teens to know they are allowed to be afraid and to cry.

Encourage them to share their feelings with family, friends and the healthcare team. Involve their friends as much as possible. Allow them to send gifts or cards/visit the hospital.

SURGERY PICTURE BOARD



OPERATING ROOM "OR" AND THE ROOM WHERE YOU WILL FALL ASLEEP.



THE SLEEP AIR/MEDICINE CALLED "ANESTHESIA" THAT YOU WILL BREATHE THROUGH A SOFT, MASK THAT WILL HELP YOUR BODY FALL ASLEEP.



THE WAITING ROOM THAT YOUR PARENT OR CAREGIVER WILL HANGOUT IN DURING YOUR PROCEDURE.



THE RECOVERY OR "WAKE UP" ROOM THAT YOU WILL BE IN AFTER YOUR PROCEDURE.

WHILE YOU FALL ASLEEP WITH THE SLEEP MEDICINE, THERE ARE SOME FUN OPTIONS LIKE VIRTUAL REALITY OR IPAD GAMES THAT YOU CAN PLAY WHILE YOU GO TO SLEEP.

