

Patient and Family Education Packet

When do I talk to my child about their surgery?

Infants (birth-2)

- Children can sense anxiety. Find as much information as you can about the surgery. This will help you to be prepared and remain more relaxed on the day of surgery.
- Bring familiar objects that will comfort your baby (favorite blanket, pacifier, and musical toy), as well as his/her favorite bottle or sippy cup.

Toddlers (2-3)

- Begin to talk about the surgery 1-3 days beforehand.
- Allow your child to choose a comfort item from home to bring (stuffed animal, blanket, toys, etc.).
- Toddlers have a limited concept of time, use explanations the toddler is familiar with, for example, “the surgery is before lunch.”
- Provide toddlers with favorite items or activities to distract toddler from boredom, fears, and new routine.
- Bring security object.
- Answer questions about pain and separation *truthfully*.

Preschoolers (3-5)

- Begin to talk about having surgery 3-5 days beforehand. Your child may start asking questions about what to expect.
- Preschool-aged children sometimes believe their surgery is a punishment and need reassurance.
- Use simple concrete child-friendly explanations of how their body will be fixed and what they will hear, feel, smell, taste, and see.
- Playing doctor and reading books about having surgery or going to the hospital are great ways to help preschoolers understand.
- Focus on what they will hear, feel, smell, taste, and see, as well as what the child is expected to do.
- Allow patient to watch pre-op video to reinforce the sequence/duration of all events.
- Use time concepts the child is familiar with: “The operation will take less time than it takes to watch a cartoon.”
- Reassure the child that they are not to blame and that the surgery is going to *fix* something specific.
- Be honest, especially about separation and potential pain.
- Children in this age group benefit from having a familiar toy or stuffed animal.

- Offer choices to provide a sense of control.

School-age (6-12)

- Begin talking about surgery at least a week ahead of time.
- Talk openly and honestly to your child about the procedure using simple, easy-to-understand words (for instance: “IV catheter” is a “small straw” to give your body a drink of water; or any medicine that you may need, etc.). Prepare your child for things he/she might see or feel (stitches or bandages).
- Allow school-age children to participate in care when possible. For example, provide a sense of control.
- Provide simple explanations about sensory and procedural information as well as what’s expected of the child.
- Try and use language that is accurate but not scary. For example, “the doctor is going to make a small opening” is less scary than “the doctor will make a cut.”
- Be honest if something will hurt after.

Adolescents (13 and older)

- Begin to talk about the surgery a 2-4 weeks before; explain why he/she needs surgery and encourage him/her to ask questions. Most teens benefit from having some control of their situation; allow your child to take part in decision-making.
- Teens may be worried about how they will look after surgery. Be sure to discuss what your child should expect about his/her appearance after the surgery.
- Your child may be worried about waking up during surgery or not waking up at all. Reassure your teen that he/she will be asleep for the entire surgery and *will* wake up when the surgery is complete.
- Respect your teenager’s need for privacy.
- Provide honest detailed explanations about surgery including what they will hear, feel, smell, taste, and see.
- Provide reassurance in their anesthesia provider’s ability.
- Provide familiar items such as clothing, magazines, tablets, etc.

How do I talk to my child about anesthesia?

With anesthesia, some children may fear losing control or dislike the sensation of having a mask on their face. It is important to explain that your child will be able to breathe with the mask on, even though it may feel like it and smell strange (maybe explain it as smell of nail polish). Explain to your child that receiving anesthesia is not the same as falling asleep at night or taking a nap; this kind of sleep is controlled by medicine, not from being tired. Maybe say a “deep deep sleep.” The anesthesiologist, or “sleepy doctor,” is there to make sure they are asleep the entire surgery and will not feel anything the surgeon is doing. Emphasize that they will wake up after their surgery when the anesthesiologist stops

giving the sleep medicine. It may be helpful to make a plan with your child before coming to the hospital. By allowing them to choose what they would like to do while waiting for anesthesia and then receiving it, your child will likely feel more in control of their situation and their emotions.

Surgery and Hospital Stay Books:

Books for Infants to Preschoolers (0-5 years)

Clifford Visits the Hospital

Norman Bridwell, 2000.

Clifford visits the hospital and causes trouble wherever he goes.

Franklin Goes to the Hospital

Paulette Bourgeois, 2011

Franklin the turtle has to go to the hospital for a surgery because he has cracked his shell. The book follows Franklin through admission and the surgery process and addresses common fears that children have about the hospital and surgery.

Maisy Goes to the Hospital

Lucy Cousins, 2009

Maisy falls and hurts her leg and has to go to the hospital. She doesn't like being away from home, but a friendly patient soon makes her feel better.

Sesame Street: Elmo Goes to the Doctor

Publication International, 2010

A board book that includes sounds and a doctor tool set.

Zip-Line

David Humphreys, 2012

A book for kids who have a scar on their chest from open heart surgery. A little girl and her bunny rabbit tell her how the girl got her scar.

Books for School-Age Children (6-12 years)

Berenstain Bears: Hospital Friends

Mike Berenstain, 2015

The Berenstain Bears take a trip to the hospital and get a tour. While brother and sister bear see the amazing things that happen in the hospital, they make new friends along the way.

Blueberry Eyes

Monica Driscoll Beatty, 1996

This non-fiction book talks about a child's experience with eye treatment, including wearing glasses and eye patches, having eye muscle surgery, and more.

Franklin Goes to the Hospital

Paulette Bourgeois, 2011

Franklin the turtle has to go to the hospital for a surgery because he has cracked his shell. The book follows Franklin through admission and the surgery process and addresses common fears that children have about the hospital and surgery.

Getting Your Child Ready for Outpatient Surgery

Jerry C. Vaughan, 2004

This book describes the surgical experience in an educational and positive way. Each area of a typical outpatient surgery area is covered. This book also includes activities and questionnaires to help children prepare for their surgery day.

Good-Bye Tonsils!

Juliana Lee Hatkoff and Craig Hatkoff, 2004

This book tells the story of Juliana, a girl who needs to have her tonsils removed. The authors walk through the day of the tonsillectomy, helping Juliana understand what will happen when she has her surgery.

Harry Goes to the Hospital

Howard Bennett, 2008

When Harry gets stomach flu, his parents take him to the hospital. With his parents' comfort and the help of lots of doctors, nurses, and other people, Harry learns that the hospital doesn't have to be a big, scary place.

Jake's Ache: A surgery Story

Rylee P. Landau, 2015

Inspired by the author's personal surgery experience. In the book, Lori tells her story to her younger cousin Jake after he finds out she has to have surgery.

The Surgery Book: For Kids

Shivani Bhatia, 2010

This book follows Iggy, a boy who needs his tonsils out, through his hospital experience. When by a doctor, it addresses common questions and fears children have before surgery.

Book for Adults

Will it Hurt? Parents' Practical Guide to Children's Surgery

Armen G. Ketchedjian, 2013

This book provides support, information, answers and counseling that parents and their children may need when facing surgery. The author walks parents through all the steps in the surgical process.

Your Child in the Hospital: A Practical Guide for Parents

Nancy Keene, 2015

This book offers advice from veteran parents on how to cope with a child's hospitalization. The book includes easy tips for preparing children for the hospital, handling medical procedures and dealing with insurance.

Websites

Rady Children's Hospital Pre-Op Tour Video

<https://www.rchsd.org/programs-services/surgery/>

A tour is also available in person on Wednesday's from 6:30pm-7:30pm in the Acute Care Pavilion (ACP), 3010 Children's Way San Diego, CA 92123. For more information or to leave a message with a Child Life Specialist, please call (858) 576-1700 x3321.

KidsHealth

www.kidshealth.org

Provides doctor-approved health information about children from birth through adolescence. KidsHealth has separate area for kids, teens, and parents.