

TIPS FOR PREPARING YOUR CHILD FOR AN UPCOMING PROCEDURE

PREPARE YOUR CHILD FOR THE PROCEDURE

Start by explaining the reason for the surgery in simple words.

- Explain what body part the doctor will be fixing and why.
- Use simple and specific language.
- For example, "The doctor needs to remove your tonsils to help you breathe better."

REMIND THEM THEY WILL BE 'ASLEEP' THROUGHOUT THE PROCEDURE

Kids often cope well knowing they will not hear, see, or feel anything during the surgery or procedure.

- Try phrases such as, "help you fall asleep" or "drift off to sleep" and avoid phrases like, "put to sleep" as many children have negative experiences with this phrase.

BE HONEST

If a child knows that something might happen, but doesn't quite know the details, their imagination can start to fill in the blanks. A child might imagine or guess what might happen, which can sometimes be incorrect or even scarier than what is happening.

REMIND YOUR CHILD THAT THIS IS NOT THEIR FAULT

Often, young children can believe that their medical treatments are punishments for doing something "wrong" or "bad." Explain that the medical treatment is the most appropriate way to take care of them. Reassure them the procedure is not a punishment, but simply a way to "help their body."

USE PRETEND PLAY

Depending on your child's age, play can be a great way to prepare them for their surgery.

- Playing about an upcoming visit can give your child a way to rehearse what will happen, work through fears and can allow them to feel more in control. This may make it easier for them to manage when they have to be the patient.
- When engaging your child in pretend play, encourage your child to imagine they are a doctor. You can use household items as instruments or a pretend play doctor set. Play with your child and mention things a doctor might tell your child as a patient. Help your child to feel comfortable with answering questions and responding to what the doctor might ask.

Additional Tips for Preparing for a Surgery or Procedure:

SHARE THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS

- Provide opportunities for your child to share their thoughts and feelings about their upcoming hospital visit.
- Allow your child to steer the conversation.
- Try asking, “Is there anything you were wondering about?” and/or “what do you think is going to be easy/hard?”
- Children tend to express their feelings and describe previous experiences through play. Encourage them to play out medical experiences to promote mastery over their experience.

Use Books and Visuals

- Books and visuals may help guide your conversation with your child regarding their hospital experience, going to surgery and/or learning about their body. Remember, when reading these books, encourage your child to ask questions, explore feelings and correct any misconceptions they may have.
- Some recommendations include...
 - *Surgery on Sunday*, by Kat Harrison
 - *Going to have Surgery: A Toddler Prep Book*, by Amy and Aaron Pittman
 - *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood, Daniel Goes to the Hospital*, by PBS Kids (TV Episode)

ENCOURAGE RELAXATION AND DISTRACTION

- Validate their feelings while providing your child opportunities of comfort and normalcy.
- Encourage your child to bring a comfort item, toy or activity.

DISCUSS PAIN WITH YOUR CHILD

- It is normal for children to experience some pain after surgery. Remind your child where they may feel pain following the surgery.
- Try to use words such as, "sore," "pressure," "uncomfortable," "ache" "discomfort," "hurt"
- Remind them they will still be able to play and do things they normally do; it just might have to be adapted until they heal.
- For Example, “After you get your hernia fixed, you will be able to play, but we will start with resting and watching movies. Once you’re feeling better, you’ll be able to play just like before.”

BE SURE TO TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

- Although your child cannot eat or drink before their procedure, we encourage caregivers to eat before coming to the hospital. It is important for caregivers to take care of themselves.

If you have additional questions regarding how to prepare or support your child for their upcoming procedure, please call the Surgical Services **Certified Child Life Specialist** at 858-576-1700 ext. 223321