

Tips to Help Your Child Cope with Surgery

School aged children are best prepared 1 to 2 weeks before their surgery. Ensure that they have time to ask questions about their surgery and let them express their feelings or concerns. Being open and honest when talking to your child about their surgery will foster a trusting relationship. If your child becomes upset, take this opportunity to help identify ways they can cope. Focus on what they will see, feel, and hear, and try to use non-threatening words that they will understand to describe what will happen while they are asleep. Clear information can lessen fears and clear up any incorrect ideas or misconceptions your child may have.

Remind them about their surgery a few days before and again the night before their surgery. Help them pack some of their favorite things to provide comfort and create familiar surroundings. Remember that crying and being afraid are normal reactions.

School aged children may find the following stressful:

- What they will experience-sights, sounds, and smells
- Change to their body
- Waking up during surgery
- Separation from caregiver
- Loss of control

Preparing your school aged child for surgery:

- One to two weeks before the surgery, explain why the surgery is necessary, the benefits, what will happen, and how it may feel. Unless they ask, include only the steps they will see, hear, smell, and feel.
- Encourage your child to express their feelings. Anxiety, fear, and anger are normal.
- Tell your child that you will be with them as much as possible during their hospital stay.
- Offer choices whenever possible to give your child a sense of control. For example, "Do you want to take your medicine with apple juice or water?"
- Encourage your child to pack a few familiar items from home to bring along (stuffed animal, blanket, and toys) to provide comfort and help create familiarity in the hospital setting.
- Some stories that may help prepare your child for their upcoming procedure are "*Franklin Goes to the Hospital*" and "*Curious George Goes to the Hospital*".
- Bring a note book to write down questions that you might want to ask the health care team when you see them.
- Although we do our best to run on time, please plan for long waits.
- Please do not hesitate to ask questions or explain to staff what helps your child.