

Tips to Help Siblings Cope with their Siblings' Upcoming Surgery

When a child goes to the hospital, the whole family is impacted. Siblings often have questions and may respond with a variety of emotions. Take time to explain to the siblings what is going to happen, what they can do to help, and how their own routines may be affected.

Siblings may:

- Worry about what is happening to their brother or sister
- Feel sad or alone because they miss their parents and/or sibling
- Be jealous that their brother or sister is getting attention
- Feel anger or resentment
- Worry that their behavior somehow caused their brother's or sister's hospitalization
- Worry that they will have to have the same procedure

Helping siblings cope:

- Be open and honest with every member of the family when answering questions.
- Use simple, straight-forward language children can understand when you talk about their concerns and give information about hospitalization.
- Ensure siblings know where they will be, who will be looking after them, and when they will see you. Predictability helps children cope.
- Arrange for siblings to visit or talk with each other over the phone.
- Help siblings feel included by involving them in plans, making cards and pictures.
- Spend some one-on-one time with each sibling.
- Try to keep routines as normal as possible.
- Let the sibling know that their issues, feelings, and problems are heard. Some siblings may need this reassurance when their brother or sister needs more of the attention.
- Tell them the plan. For example, who will pick them up from school that day.