

## Preparing Your Child for Surgery

### Before Surgery

Coming to the hospital can be a scary time for children and parents. Take some time to prepare yourself and your child for the surgery. It will make your visit easier.

You will be able to stay with your child right up to the surgery. You will meet with the anesthesiologist before the surgery.

- Learn about your child's surgery. Look on websites, [medlineplus.gov](http://medlineplus.gov) is a good place to start. Talk to your doctor and your surgeon. You could also borrow books from your library.
- Call 203-739-7245 for Danbury Hospital or 860-210-5273 for New Milford Hospital to arrange a tour of the surgical area before surgery.
- Pack a small bag for the day of surgery. You could include a few favorite toys, books, and a favorite blanket. They may wear their pajamas to the hospital.
- Talk with your doctor if your child takes regular medications. You will need to know if she should take them or not before the surgery.
- Follow the food guidelines to protect your child's safety while under anesthesia.

**The night before surgery-** Nothing to eat or drink after midnight *unless told otherwise*.

A nurse will call the day before surgery with instructions and times for arrival.

Prepare a special place for them for when they come home; warm, comfortable, close to the caregiver. Have quiet toys, books, movies available.

### Questions to ask your physician before Surgery

How is the surgery commonly done?

Will I be able to stay with my child until they are sedated?

What is the best type of anesthesia for my child?

How long will the surgery take?

Can I be there when my child wakes up?

Who will tell me when the surgery is over?

How long will my child stay in recovery?

When can we go home?

### What to Expect the Day of Surgery

When you arrive your child will be given a name band. This will have her name, date of birth and the doctor's name. You will be asked for this many times.

You will be brought to a room where your child will change into hospital pajamas. There are chairs and a TV for your comfort while you wait for the surgery. A nurse will take your child's temperature, weight and blood pressure. She will ask about your child's medical history. An anesthesiologist will meet with you and answer any questions. The surgeon will meet with you and answer any questions. Your child will be given a surgical hat.

Your child will be brought to the operating room. You will be asked to wait in the family waiting area. You should remain there so you can be contacted when the surgery is over.

## After your child's surgery

The surgeon will speak to you after the surgery. A nurse will come and get you after the surgery. You will be given written discharge instructions. A nurse will go over these instructions with you. The nurse will give you a number to call if you have any questions when you get home.

Your child will be encouraged to drink plenty of liquids after the surgery. This will help them wake up. They may have an IV in their hand when they wake up. This is also providing fluids.

If your child is having one day surgery you will be going home the same day. The surgeon will give you instructions on how to care for your child. Discuss with your child's nurse about a follow up phone call. At any point you may call the hospital and your surgeon with any concerns. If no one can be reached and you feel it is an emergency then go to the nearest Emergency Room.

Some tips to get back to normal

- Try to return to a normal home routine.
- Give your child choices in terms of meals and activities as appropriate.
- Let your child know it is okay to show feelings about the surgery. Offer support and understanding.
- Plan to stay with your child at home; do not leave them for long time periods.

Good words to use when explaining the surgery	
Instead of this	Try this
Test	See how (specific body part) is working
Surgery	Procedure
Incision	Special opening
Edema (swelling)	Puffiness
Stretcher	Rolling bed
Pain	Hurt, "owie", "Boo-Boo"
Anesthesia	Sleepy Medicine
Blood pressure	Hug your arm
Recovery room	Wake up room
IV (intravenous)	Tube in arm
Being put to sleep	The doctor will give you special medicine to help you nap
Cut you open	Make an opening
Sew you up with a needle	The doctor will fix the problem



## **Age specific pre surgery preparation**

### **Infants (0 to 12 months)**

Keep your baby's routine the same before the day of surgery. Get plenty of rest.

To comfort your infant:

- Bring a favorite blanket, toy or pacifier.
- Bring a familiar bottle nipple or juice cup for after the surgery
- Cuddle, and comfort your infant after the surgery

### **Toddlers (1 to 3 years)**

Prepare your child one day before the surgery. Your child's biggest fear is being away from you. Some children under 3 years old may think of it as a punishment. Be with your child as much as possible while at hospital. This will help make them feel more secure.

- Use simple words to explain the surgery and why your child needs it. (See chart).
- Play with dolls or toys to show what will happen the day of the surgery
- Read children's books to your child about going to the doctor/hospital.
- Give your child choices e.g. which toy would you like to bring or which T-shirt do you want to wear to the hospital?

### **Preschoolers (3 to 5 years)**

Prepare your child three days before the procedure. Children at this age may fear damage to their bodies. Be careful when explaining the surgery. Do not say you will be put to sleep. The child may think of a pet being put to sleep. You could say the doctor will give you medicine to make you sleepy. Explain that the hospital is a safe place where many children go for surgery.

- Use simple terms to explain the surgery and why it is being done (see chart)

- Prepare your child by playing. Play doctor or nurse with your child to show what will happen the day of the surgery.
- Read children's books or give a coloring book about children in hospital.
- Encourage your child to talk about ideas and feelings; drawing is a good way to do this.

### **Elementary school-age children (5 to 12 years)**

Prepare your child a week ahead of the visit. Children over 6 may worry about losing control and damage to their bodies.

- Allow your child to ask questions or express fears.
- Ask your child what they are thinking and how they feel about the surgery.
- Explain surgery using correct terms and visual aids.
- Be honest about what will happen
- Do not deny there will be pain afterwards

### **Adolescence (12 to 18 years)**

Teenagers may not want to ask questions. This may make you think they know more than they do. They may worry about what their friends will think.

- Talk about what is going to happen
- Encourage discussion and questions
- Respect their need for privacy
- Be honest about what will happen

Your child needs your calm, reassuring presence. Be positive, explain how the surgery will help them and make them feel better. A child's emotional reaction can be influenced by the caregiver.