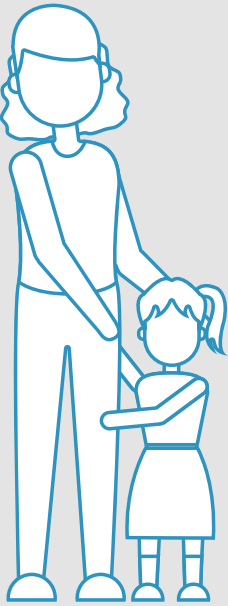


Preparing Your Child For Surgery

Step One: Preparing Yourself



Learn as Much as You Can: Before speaking with your child about an upcoming surgery, educate yourself as much as possible about your child's condition, the procedure, and what will happen before and after the surgery, including pain control, wound care, and recovery time. Do not be afraid to ask questions. Your child's care team is there to answer any questions or quell any fears you may have.

Set the Tone: Make sure you remain calm when speaking to your child about an upcoming surgery. Children tend to model what they see in their parents and caregivers. If you stay calm, it can help to ease your child's anxiety.

Helpful Questions to Ask

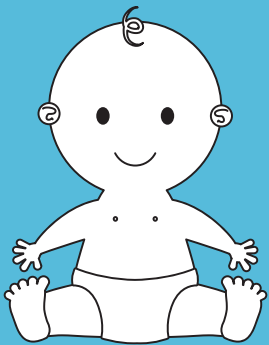


- How long will the surgery take?
- How will I be updated during the surgery?
- How long do you expect my child to be in the hospital after the surgery?
- How will my child's pain be controlled after surgery?
- How can I best help my child after his or her surgery?
- Will my child wake up with any tubes or drains?
- Can my child tour the hospital before his or her surgery?
- Will my child need any therapies (PT, OT, Speech) after surgery?
- Bowel Specific: When do you expect my child to wean from TPN and/or tube feeds?
- Intestinal transplant specific: How often will my child need scopes to check for rejection after intestinal transplant?
- Intestinal transplant specific: Will my child wake up with an ostomy?

Helpful Tips For Speaking To Your Child About Surgery.

- Educate your child about the surgery based on his or her age level.
- Ask your child what they know about the upcoming surgery, so you have a baseline of what they understand.
- Use short and simple words.
- Be thoughtful with your choice of words (Ex: instead of 'cut,' say 'create an opening.').
- Encourage questions and sharing of feelings.
- If your child asks a question about his or her upcoming surgery, be honest.
- Tell your child that going to the hospital does not mean that they have done something wrong.
- Make sure your discussion takes place in a calm, quiet environment.

Age-Specific Surgery Preparation Tips



Infant
(0-12 months)

Common Causes of Stress

- Separation from parents.
- Unfamiliar caregivers, sights, sounds, smells.
- New routines.

How You Can Help:

- Remain calm and hold your baby when possible.
- When your baby cannot eat, walk, or rock your baby.
- Bring a favorite blanket or pacifier to the hospital.
- Listen to their favorite music, sing or talk, or read a favorite book.



**Toddler
(1-3 years)**

When to Prepare:

- It is recommended for planned surgery to avoid explaining the procedure until the day before to avoid making the child anxious.

Common Causes of Stress

- Being left alone.
- Loss of normal comforts.
- Large amounts of medical equipment in the surroundings.

How You Can Help:

- Give your toddler the choice of bringing a toy or blanket.
- Explain the staff and their roles.
- Provide simple explanations.
- Read books about going to the hospital and/or having surgery.



**Pre-
Schooler
(3-5 years)**

When to Prepare:

- It is recommended for planned surgery to avoid explaining the procedure until the day before to avoid making the child anxious.

Common Causes of Stress

- Being left alone.
- Fear of needles and shots.
- Fear of, or the anticipation of pain.

How You Can Help:

- Explain the procedure in simple terms.
- Remind your child they did not do something wrong, and this is not a punishment.
- Give them choices, such as bringing a favorite toy.
- Check to see if your center allows tours of the hospital.

A note about timing: Your child understands things based on his or her age and developmental level. The younger the child, the closer to the surgery or procedure you should prepare them.

When to Prepare:

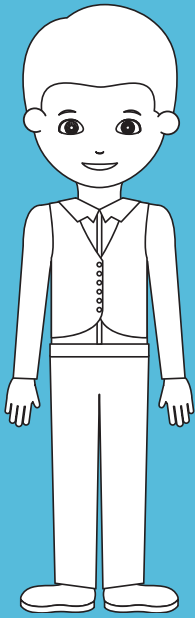
- It is recommended for planned surgery to avoid explaining the procedure until about one week before to avoid making the child anxious.

Common Causes of Stress

- Loss of control.
- Fear of or anticipation of pain.
- Fear of needles.
- Fear of waking up during surgery.
- Fear of damage to their bodies.

How You Can Help:

- Remind your child they did not do something wrong, and this is not a punishment.
- Explain how the surgery will help your child.
- Give them choices; it provides them with a sense of control.
- See if your transplant center or hospital allows tours to become familiar with the environment.
- Remind your child the surgery is performed to correct a problem, not create a new one.



**School
(5-12 years)**

When to Prepare:

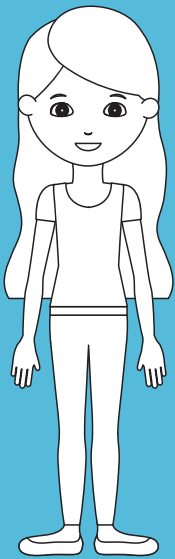
- Involve a teenager from the very beginning. Teens like to be a part of the decision-making process.

Common Causes of Stress

- Loss of control.
- Changes in appearance.
- Fear of surgery and its risks.
- Fear of pain.
- Fear of the unknown.
- Fear of being embarrassed or humiliated in public.
- Fear of waking up during operation or fear of not waking up.

How You Can Help:

- Remind your child they did not do something wrong, and this is not a punishment.
- Explain how the surgery will help your child.
- Give them choices; it provides them with a sense of control.
- See if your transplant center or hospital allows tours to become familiar with the environment.
- Remind your child the surgery is performed to correct a problem, not create a new one.



**Teen
(12-18 years)**

Kid-Friendly Surgery Terms

Anesthesia: Medicine that makes you take a nap or stay asleep during surgery.

- When discussing anesthesia with your child, avoid using the phrase "put to sleep," as children often associate this with euthanizing a pet. Also, avoid using the word "gas."
- Tell your child he or she will take a nap after a special doctor (the 'sleep doctor' or anesthesiologist) gives them some medicine.
- Reassure your child they will not see, feel, or hear anything during the surgery.

Anesthesiologist: The doctor who gives you the medicine to sleep during surgery.

Blood pressure cuff: This is a device wrapped around your arm or your leg to check your blood pressure. The cuff squeezes your arm or leg when blood pressure is measured.

- Be sure to tell your child will get tight, but will get looser and looser and should not hurt.

Electrodes: These are small sticky pads connected to wires placed on the chest or the legs to track the heartbeat during surgery.

- Be sure to tell your child they do not hurt.

Incision: The opening made on your body by the surgeon to do your surgery. The opening is closed when the surgery is done.

- Avoid using the phrase "cut open"

IV: Small plastic tube placed in a vein under your skin. It is used to give you medicine and water (fluids).

Mask: A soft, clear plastic mask sometimes used to give anesthetic medicines. When explaining this form of anesthesia to a child, avoid using the word 'gas.' Instead, use a phrase like 'sleepy air.'

Pain medicine: Medicine to help you not hurt.

Pulse ox (pulse oximeter): A small bandaid with a red light that allows doctors/nurses to know how much oxygen is in your blood.

Pre-Op: The room you wait in before surgery.

Operating room (OR): The room where surgery happens.

PACU/Recovery Room: the room you wake up in after surgery.

Surgeon: The doctor who does your surgery. A transplant surgeon is a special type of doctor that will do your transplant.

For an extensive listing of kid-friendly terms, please visit the [Transplant Unwrapped Kids Glossary.](#)

Do you want to learn more?

Visit us on our **Main Website** where you will find helpful webinars, downloads, and support systems. Our **Parents Page** on the Kid's site also offers helpful downloads and information.



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www.transplantunwrapped.org



www.transplantunwrappedkids.org



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