

## Helpful tips for parents

When your child needs surgery it is bound to cause some anxiety – for both of you. Your job as a parent is to help make the process as easy as possible for your child. But that can be hard to do when you are experiencing your own worries and concerns.

### **Preparing your child for surgery is shown to help them feel better faster.**

Take advantage of opportunities to tour the surgical facility with your child before their surgery. We want patients to experience the hospital environment in a non-threatening way before their procedure. Having the chance to walk through a patient care unit, explore a patient room, see how the hospital staff dress and learn about some of the medical equipment is very helpful. Children learn a great deal through their senses, so explaining what they will see, hear, smell and feel builds their understanding.



### **Abide by the 'no surprises rule'**

All kids love surprises – except when it comes to surgery. Speak calmly and honestly to your child about what they can expect.

The PREP program at Hendricks Regional Health is a free program designed to help children and parents know what to expect during surgery. You can schedule an appointment for your child by calling (317) 745-8451.

### **Keep your composure and speak honestly to your child about what to expect.**

Children have an understandable fear of the unknown. Before you talk to your child about the surgery, speak to your child's physician or nurse about what to expect. Once you understand step-by-step what will happen, explain it to your child honestly and calmly using terms your child can understand. He or she needs to know that even though you may not be with them every minute, you will be waiting nearby. And remember, keep your composure. Children are affected by their parents' anxiety.

### **Be prepared for any emotions that your child may feel after surgery.**

It can be very normal for your child to act angry with you after a procedure. A child won't usually become upset at people they don't know, like a doctor or nurse. But knowing their mom or dad will love them no matter what, a child may express those strong feelings toward their parent. Some medications may cause your child to act sleepy or "goofy." Be sure to arrange childcare for siblings on the day of surgery so that you can focus your attention on your child that will be having surgery.

### **Bring along your child's comfort item.**

Sometimes that special memento from home is just the thing to calm a frightened child. We always encourage patients to bring a special toy or blanket from home. And we take steps to make kids feel at ease in the operating room, such as playing Disney music over the speakers. We also have videos or cartoons to watch and will give a stuffed animal or puppy pillow to each child to cuddle.

### **Help hospital staff get to know your child.**

When it comes to your child, you are the world's best expert. Establish an open line of communication with staff to help them get to know your child. By asking questions, you can learn a lot from your nurse's own experiences that will help you better care for your child.

### **Anesthesia for your child.**

For many parents, one of the most fearful aspects of their child's surgery is anesthesia. It is important to remember that today's anesthesia medications are safer than ever. Your child will be monitored continuously, and before surgery, a thorough medical assessment including a detailed medical and social history is completed beforehand to screen for potential problems.

Keeping your child comfortable after surgery is extremely important. Your child's nurse will work with you to minimize your child's pain and nausea.



## Resources for Parents

To help children prepare for surgery, many children's authors have created story-books on the topic. Although there are many excellent books to choose from, here are a few recommended by expert staff on our pediatric unit:

*Harry Goes to the Hospital: A Story for Children about What It's Like to Be in the Hospital*, by Howard J. Bennett

*The Surgery Book: For Kids*, by Shivani Bhatia M.D.

*Do I Have to Go to the Hospital?: A First Look at Going To the Hospital (A First Look at...Series)*, by Pat Thomas

Also, find other helpful information at our online parenting center at [hendricks.org](http://hendricks.org).

## The day of surgery

**Upon your arrival.** When you arrive the morning of your child's surgery you should park in the visitor parking closest to the door. Your first stop will be the registration desk. During the registration process, your child will get a soft plastic bracelet with their name on it. This ID bracelet is important to keep your child safe during the hospital stay. Any time your child needs to be identified in the hospital, their ID bracelet should be checked.

**After registration.** After registration, you and your child will be taken to a hospital room. It is possible your room may be on the Pediatric Unit, the Surgery Unit, or the Outpatient Surgery Unit. Once you are settled, the nurse will go over some questions with you related to your child's safety and comfort. Next, your nurse will give your child hospital pajamas to change into. Lastly, your nurse will check your child's height, weight, temperature, heart rate, blood pressure and respiratory rate.



### Hey mom! It hurts ...

Keeping your child's pain under control will not only keep them comfortable, but will also help in the healing process. Make sure you tell your nurse if you feel your child's pain is not being relieved.

**Starting your child's IV.** Your child will need to have an IV placed before surgery to administer anesthesia. You will have the option to use a numbing medication on your child's skin before the IV is placed. A nurse from the Infusion Center with specialized training will start the IV. Younger children are usually given medication to keep them calm and comfortable before they go to surgery. Also, an anesthesiologist will visit you before surgery to answer any questions.

**The morning of surgery.** Please report to outpatient registration two hours before your child's surgery is scheduled. This allows time for completion of the admission assessment, review of instructions and a meeting with the hospital staff and physicians that are part of the surgical team. Before going to surgery all piercings and jewelry must be removed. If your child has long hair an elastic band without metal can be used to pull hair back.

**On your way to surgery.** When it is time to go to surgery, your child can ride on a cart, in a crib or be carried in your arms. You may accompany your child to the main corridor outside of the operating rooms.

**During surgery.** We ask that parents wait in our outpatient surgery waiting area so that your child's surgeon or other health care providers may find you. The area is staffed by an ambassador and volunteer to help answer your questions and provide directions. Please be sure to notify the information desk if you leave the waiting area.

**After surgery.** After surgery your child will go to the Post-Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU). Typically children stay in the PACU for about an hour for care before they are brought back to their room. The nursing staff will call the waiting area when they are ready to take your child back to their room so that you can join your child.



## The night before surgery

- Your child cannot eat or drink after midnight. This also includes mints, gum or candy. It is very important that your child's stomach is empty before surgery.
- Pack a bag with comfort items for your child such as a favorite blanket. Be sure any item of value is labeled with the patient's name and is kept in possession of the patient or a family member at all times.
- When thinking about clothes to wear the day of surgery, consider clothing that is loose fitting and easy to take off and on. Be sure to pack an extra pair of underwear in case of an accident.
- Be sure you have arranged for childcare for siblings so that you can provide undivided attention to your child that is having surgery.