

Let's Talk About...

Surgery: What to expect

Talking to your child about their surgery makes it easier to understand and cope. Here's what you and your child can expect at the hospital before and after surgery.

What happens while my child waits to have surgery?

When your child arrives at the hospital:

- They'll receive an ID band with their name on their wrist or ankle. A healthcare provider will check the ID band when talking to your child and before their surgery or procedure.
- You'll receive an ID band or code so hospital staff know you are your child's parent.
- You'll fill out some paperwork.
- A hospital worker will check your child's weight and height and then take you and your child to a hospital room.
- A nurse will check your child's breathing rate, temperature, and blood pressure.
- They may need help wiping down their body with special wipes.
- Your child will put some pajamas on.
- A nurse may give your child medicine if they need it and explain what happens at the hospital.

Will I see the doctors before my child's surgery?

You will speak with your child's surgeon and anesthesiologist before your child goes to surgery.

The surgeon will:

- Review your child's medical history
- Explain the surgery
- Mark your child's body where they'll have surgery (if needed)

- Ask you to sign a consent form if you didn't already sign one with the nurse

The anesthesiologist will:

- Talk to you about the medicine they'll use to put your child to sleep during surgery
- Discuss which medicine is safest for your child

You can ask both the surgeon and anesthesiologist any questions you have before surgery.

Will my child have an IV?

Your child may need an IV to receive fluids and medicine during surgery. If your child needs an IV:

- The surgery staff will place the IV in the operating room (OR) after your child falls asleep but before surgery, unless they are above a certain weight. If your child is above a certain weight, the nurse will place an IV before your child goes back to the OR.
- Tell the surgeon if your child sucks their thumb for comfort. The surgery staff often puts an IV in a young child's hand, but they can put it in another place instead.
- The IV will stay in place after the surgery until your child goes home.



How long will I wait before my child goes into surgery?

Your child will be scheduled for a surgery time, but they may need to wait longer because:

- Babies and small children are often scheduled earlier in the day
- Surgeries may take longer than expected
- Children may need more tests after they arrive at the hospital
- Emergency surgeries may need to happen before scheduled surgeries

If your child has not gone to surgery by 20 minutes past their scheduled time, ask a nurse at the nurses' desk in the waiting area for more information.

How does my child go to the operating room?

When it is time for the surgery, the anesthesiologist will carry a baby or toddler to the OR. Preschool-aged children and older may choose to go to the OR in a wagon, wheelchair, or toy car, or walk with the anesthesiologist.

What happens when my child goes to the operating room?

Once your child is in the OR, the nurses will cover them with a warm blanket. The anesthesiologist will then help your child fall asleep with anesthesia. Your child may:

- Choose a scent (root beer, grape, or bubblegum) and breathe the medicine in through a mask
- Get medicine through an IV

After your child receives the medicine, they will fall asleep in about a minute. A member of the OR staff may use clippers to cut hair near the surgery site, if needed. They will also check the part of your child's body where they'll have surgery again.

Where do I wait during my child's surgery?

During your child's surgery, you can wait in the parent waiting room. Tell the receptionist if you're leaving the waiting room for any reason. This will



help the staff find you if they need to. Do not leave the hospital while your child is in surgery.

If the surgery is longer than 2 hours, an operating room nurse will update you regularly. The surgeon will talk to you in the waiting room after surgery, and you'll see your child as soon as possible.

Where does my child recover after surgery?

Your child will recover from anesthesia in the post-anesthesia care unit (PACU) right after surgery. The PACU is an urgent care area staffed by nurses trained to care for children recovering from anesthesia.

While your child is in the PACU:

- Only 2 family members can stay with your child, and no one younger than 14 years old will be allowed in the PACU
- You must stay near your child's bedside and respect the other patients' privacy
- A nurse will constantly care for your child and answer your questions
- You may be asked to leave the PACU temporarily if there is an emergency

