

Let's Talk About...

Surgery, After Care

What should I do about nausea and vomiting and when will my child eat normal foods?

Your child may feel sick to his stomach (nausea) after surgery. There are many reasons. Children who have nausea may also vomit. There are many reasons a child has nausea after surgery:

- Medicine given to help a child sleep during surgery (anesthesia) may cause an upset stomach.
- The movement of the car can cause motion sickness and vomiting.
- Some surgeries may make your child more likely to vomit. If your child has had surgery that involves the middle ear, eye muscle, teeth or mouth, or has had a tonsillectomy, orchiopexy, or umbilical hernia repair, he may have more problems with nausea and vomiting.
- Some pain medicines can cause nausea and vomiting.

You can control nausea and prevent vomiting by helping your child to lie quietly and decrease movement. You can also wait to have your child drink until he feels less sick to his stomach.

At times, it is impossible to prevent vomiting. If your child vomits, wait until his stomach has settled down about 30 minutes, and then give him small sips of clear liquid or ice chips every five to 10 minutes. Clear liquids include water, apple juice mixed with water, or Pedialyte® for younger children. If your child is older, try a popsicle, Gatorade®, Jello®, decaffeinated Coke®, or 7-Up®. Have your child drink a small amount every 15 to 30 minutes but do not force it. If the nausea returns, wait another 30 minutes and try again.

Once your child has stopped feeling nauseous and throwing up, begin giving solid foods. Start with soft,

bland foods like cooked cereal, applesauce, toast, crackers, or pasta. Avoid fatty or greasy foods such as french fries and hamburgers. Restaurants in general should be avoided.

What if my child has a fever?

It is normal for a child to have a low fever in the first 24 hours. If his temperature goes above 101° Fahrenheit (38.3° C), call your child's doctor. Encouraging your child to drink fluids every few minutes may help. You may also give acetaminophen (A-seat-a-MEN-o-fen) to control his fever. Common brand names for acetaminophen are Tylenol®, Tempra®, Liquiprin®, and Panadol®. Be aware that some pain medications contain acetaminophen. If you are already giving pain medications that have acetaminophen, do not give any more acetaminophen without calling your doctor first.

When can my child bathe or shower?

Follow the doctor's instructions. In general, your child can wash with a washcloth the first day or night as long as he does not get the bandage wet. Be careful not to submerge the surgery site in water. Ask your doctor when your child can bathe and follow the doctor's instructions.

What is a normal amount of drainage from the bandage?

Some bandages will fill up with blood but should be able to hold without leaking. If you put your hand on the bandage and see blood on your hand when you remove it, or blood is getting on your child's clothes or sheets, call your doctor. You may need to add another bandage on top of the soiled bandage but you should not take the bandage off.

If you see bright red bleeding, hold pressure over the surgery site like you would for a nosebleed.

Call your child's doctor right away. If your child had throat surgery and starts to bleed, he is old enough to gargle without choking, have him gargle with ice water. He can gargle while you call the doctor.

When should I change the bandage?

No matter what type of surgery, it is important to follow your doctor's instructions about changing the bandage. In general, the bandage needs to be kept dry. To avoid spills on the bandage from food or fluids, cover it with clothing, towels or bibs when your child eats or drinks. If your child had surgery in the diaper area, it may be hard to keep the bandage dry. If the bandage becomes soiled with urine, change it. Please follow your doctor's instructions.

How often should my child urinate (pee)?

How often your child urinates lets you know the amount of liquid in his body. After surgery, a child may have a lower level of liquid in the body. This is called dehydration (dee-hi-DRAY-shun). Some signs of dehydration include dark yellow urine, a dry mouth (no spit), chapped lips, or the soft spot on a baby's head will sink inwards. If any of these happen, give your child more liquid. Start with clear liquids and progress to solid foods as outlined above. Your child should return to a normal pattern of urination within 24 hours of surgery. Generally, a baby should have six to eight wet diapers in a 24-hour period, and an older child will urinate every six to eight hours.

What if my child is constipated?

Anesthesia and pain medicine can cause constipation after surgery by slowing normal activity in intestines. If your child has hard, dry bowel movements, goes three or four days between bowel movements, has stomach pain with bowel movements, or the bowel pattern changes, your child may be constipated. Start your child on a diet high in fiber. Foods such as vegetables, oranges, raisins, beans, peas, nuts, whole-grain foods, other fruits and high-fiber cereals can help with constipation. Drinking more liquids can also reduce constipation problems.

How active can my child be?

At times, your child's coordination may be affected after surgery. This is because of surgery or because of anesthesia. To keep your child safe, it is important to follow these guidelines. Do not let an infant or young child walk without help. Keep side rails up on cribs. Keep your child from activities such as climbing a ladder, going down a slide, playing on jungle gym equipment, or riding a bike, scooter, snowboard or roller blades. Driving a car or operating anything that requires quick decisions can be dangerous for teenagers or young adults. Once your child's coordination returns, he can do his normal activities.

School is important for your child. While you do not need to rush your child back to school before he is ready, talk with your child and decide together if he is ready to go back to school. Sometimes your doctor can give you suggestions on when to return to school. If at first your child cannot go to a full day of school, let him go for as long as he can. Then gradually increase the time at school until he can attend all day.

What is normal behavior after surgery?

It is very normal to see behavior changes after surgery. Some examples of changes include acting like a younger child (bed-wetting or acting out), changes in sleeping and eating patterns, or nightmares. You can help reduce these changes by being patient with your child. Comfort your child and help him feel that he is safe. Understand that your child has been upset by surgery. Most changes in behavior only last a few days to two weeks. If they last longer than three to four weeks, call your pediatrician.

How can I tell if my child needs pain medicine or other medicines?

We want your child to be comfortable, but no surgery is pain free. Some children can tell us about their pain. Age or developmental delay may prevent this. Other ways children communicate they are in pain include moaning, whimpering, making faces of pain, crying, being irritable, being inactive, having no appetite or not sleeping. For all children, it is important to offer comfort and listen to their

