Let's Talk About...

Surgery: Keeping Your Child Safe

You may feel it's best not to tell your child too much about their surgery. However, usually the more both you and your child learn about the procedure or surgery and what to expect, the easier it will be to cope with the experience.

- Ask about anything you don't understand. You have the right to understand every word caregivers say, whether they are talking about a procedure, surgery, test results, or treatments. If it doesn't make sense to you, please ask for an explanation that you can understand.
- Child life specialists are also available to help your child understand the procedure or surgery and help your child cope.

What does the hospital staff do to keep my child safe during surgery?

- Your child will have an ID band or "bracelet" on his wrist or ankle so that everyone knows his name. The nurses and doctors will check your child's "bracelet" to identify him before they start the procedure or surgery.
- To further protect your child's safety, you will receive a code or ID band with your child's information. That way, the hospital staff knows that you are your child's parent.
- For most surgeries, the person performing the procedure or surgery will mark the part of the body where the procedure or surgery will be performed. They will involve you and your child when marking the body part when possible. The site will be checked again before the procedure or surgery.
- Everyone (nurses, doctors and other caregivers) who cares for your child will work to prevent surgical site infection by washing his or her hands before the procedure or surgery. You will be instructed to bathe your child the night before surgery with soap and water and also with chlorhexidine or CHG wipes. A caregiver may use clippers to cut hair where the surgery will take place. Also, surgical staff wear special gowns, gloves, hair covers and masks to keep the surgery area clean. The site of your child's surgery is cleaned with a special soap that kills germs and, possibly, your child will receive antibiotics before the surgery starts.

Preparing for after surgery care

Here is some information you can use to prepare to care for your child after his procedure or surgery:

When can I see my child after the procedure or surgery?

The hospital staff will tell you when your child is ready for you to visit. It is important you check in with the person at the desk in the surgery parent waiting room. This is on the second floor, south end of the hospital. Use the south elevators. The phone number is 801.662.2853.

Will my child have side effects from the anesthesia?

Anesthesia affects each child differently. After surgery, your child may have nausea (feel like throwing up), vomit, cry, be agitated, have trouble with his balance (fall easily), or forget how to cope with difficult situations and act younger than usual. Please ask for help when your child needs to get out of bed or use the bathroom.

What do I need to know about preoperative comfort and pain management?

- Your child will receive the pain medicines and interventions he needs to keep him comfortable. Before surgery, your child's nurse will help you identify a pain management goal (comfort, function goal) to preserve your child's comfort and manage his pain.
- Pain medicine may cause your child to have nausea, constipation, or feel light-headed. Pain medicine can have other side effects. Talk to your child's nurse about the side effects of your child's pain medicine.

What is a surgical site infection?

A surgical site infection is an infection that occurs after surgery in the part of the body where the surgery took place. Most patients who have surgery do not develop an infection.

What can I do to prevent a surgical site infection?

- Ask your healthcare providers if your child will get antibiotics before surgery.
- Make sure your healthcare providers clean their hands before examining your child.
- Ask family and friends to clean their hands before visiting your child.
- Don't let family and friends who visit your child touch the surgical wound or dressing.
- Before you take your child home, make sure the doctor or nurse has explained how to take care of the surgery site.
- Know the signs and symptoms of a surgical site infection.

How will I know if my child has a surgical site infections?

- The area where your child had surgery may be red and painful.
- The area where your child had surgery may drain cloudy liquid.
- Your child may have a fever.

What do I do if I think my child has a surgical site infection?

If you think your child has a surgical site infection, contact your child's surgeon right.

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