

## Let's Talk About...

# Orthopedic Surgery Care

Your child has had orthopedic surgery. This handout will help you care for your child after the procedure.

## Diet

### When can my child eat?

After your child wakes up from the procedure, they can drink clear liquids. Clear liquids include Pedialyte®, water, apple juice, Gatorade®, Popsicle®, and plain Jell-O®. Most babies can take a bottle or breast-feed. Your child may have a normal diet after they leave the hospital. Start feeding your child soft, easily digested foods. Try to stay away from high fat or greasy foods like hamburgers and pizza for 24 hours following the surgery.

### What should I do about nausea and vomiting?

Sedation may cause your child to feel like they will throw up (nausea), and they may vomit up to 24 hours after surgery. Sometimes the car movement or pain medicine may cause nausea. You can help control nausea by encouraging your child to lie still and decrease movement.

- If your child has trouble with nausea and vomiting, give them clear liquids. Then, slowly give them more normal foods till your child is eating normally.
- If your child vomits, give their stomach 30 to 60 minutes to settle down and then begin feeding them clear liquids. It is important for your child to drink liquids after surgery to avoid dehydration (not enough fluid in the body). It is fine if your child does not eat solid foods for a day or two.
- If they vomit all the time or it continues for several hours, call your doctor for instructions.

### How will I know if my child is drinking enough?

After surgery, your child may have low body fluids. Some signs of not having enough fluids include dark yellow urine (pee), a dry mouth (no spit), chapped lips, and the soft spot on a baby's head sinks inward. If you notice any of these things, give your child more to drink. Your child should urinate (pee) normally within 24 hours after surgery. A baby should have 6 to 8 wet diapers in a 24-hour period. An older child should urinate every 6 to 8 hours.

## Pain

### How can I tell if my child is in pain?

No surgery is pain free, but it is important for your child to be comfortable so they can heal. If your child is older, you can talk to them about their pain and figure out what they need. If your child is younger or developmentally delayed, they may moan, whimper, make a face of pain, cry, be irritable, be inactive, not eat, or not sleep. In all cases, you should comfort your child and listen to their concerns.

### How can I help with my child's pain?

Raise the part that had surgery up on pillows for at least the first 24 hours. This will limit the amount of swelling. If your child had surgery on their leg, have them wiggle their toes every once in a while to prevent swelling. Put an ice pack on the surgery site for 24 to 48 hours. This may help decrease pain and swelling.

## Medicine

### When should I give pain medicine to my child?

Give your child pain medicine as your child's doctor orders. NEVER give pain medicine on an empty stomach. Food or drink will decrease the chance of nausea. Your child's need for pain medicine will decrease after a few days. Your doctor may suggest

you give your child Tylenol® or ibuprofen in the appropriate amounts for pain. The doctor may also have you give your child a stronger medicine for pain. Some of these medicines have Tylenol® in them, so be sure not to give Tylenol® at the same time if your child takes one of these stronger medicines.

## Dressing Care

### How should I care for the dressing?

Your child may have an ace wrap or a bandage on the surgery area. Before touching the wound or bandage, be sure to wash your hands. Keep your child's bandage clean and dry.

### How much drainage is normal?

A small amount of blood or drainage is usual. If the bandage becomes soaked with oozing fluids or bright red from bleeding, contact your surgeon or go to the closest emergency room.

### When can the dressing come off?

Your surgeon will tell you when the dressing can get wet for a shower and when the bandage can be totally removed. If you have questions about this, please call the surgeon's office.

## Activity

### How active can my child be?

Limit your child's activity for the next 24–48 hours. They may put weight on the part that had surgery as tolerated. A physical therapist may meet with you and your child to teach them how to use crutches. Your child should limit sports or gym activities as instructed by the surgeon.

## Behavior

### What is normal behavior after surgery?

It is normal to see behavior changes after surgery. Call your pediatrician if the behavior changes last longer than 3 to 4 weeks. Some examples of changes include bed-wetting or acting out, changes in sleep and eating patterns, or nightmares. Be patient with your child; this will help reduce these changes.

## Calling the Doctor

### When should I call the doctor?

You should call your doctor if your child has any of the following symptoms:

- Temperature over 101°F
- Drainage from the wound increases
- Increased swelling
- Bleeding
- Uncontrolled pain
- Numbness of fingers and toes
- Signs of dehydration (dry mouth, less than 6 to 8 wet diapers per day, lack of tears)
- Excessive diarrhea or constipation
- Any other unusual symptoms
- Chest pain or shortness of breath or any other emergency: Go to the Emergency Department or Call 911

### How do I call the doctor?

- **Primary Children's Orthopedic Office:**  
801.662.5600
- **After hours, call the Primary Children's operator:**  
801.662.1000 ask for the on-call orthopedic resident
- **Primary Children's Same-day Surgery:**  
801.662.2855