

Preparing Your Child for Surgery: School-aged (6-12 Years)

Coming to the hospital can be a difficult experience for children of any age as there are many new sights, sounds and unfamiliar faces. Preparing your child ahead of their hospital visit can help decrease his/her anxiety and fear and increase his/her ability to cope with what is happening. It can be difficult to find the right words to say to your child so we have created this information sheet to help you prepare your child for surgery in a way that provides simple, honest and accurate information.

Your child's development at this age:

- Want more control and independence in daily activities
- Like to be successful and enjoy completing tasks
- Can feel uncomfortable by new people, spaces and hospital equipment
- May be curious about anesthesia and how it keeps them asleep
- May be worried about missing school or activities after surgery



How you can help your child:

- Prepare your child approximately 3-5 days before the surgery by:
 - Use books or pictures to help teach your child about the surgery
 - Use soft words to explain why your child needs surgery and what body part will be affected
 - Talk to your child about anesthesia and remind him/her that they will not feel, see or hear anything during surgery
 - Discuss what may be different when he/she wakes up (such as a cast or bandage)
 - Share information around what your child will hear, see and feel at the hospital
- Check your child's understanding by asking them to repeat what they understood from the doctor's visit
- Allow your child to ask questions
- Discuss any ways that may help your child relax if they are feeling anxious (watching movies, listening to music, taking deep breaths, etc.)
- Remain calm as your child can sense your emotions
- Give your child opportunities for choices and control
- Ask the hospital staff if your child's friends or family can visit after the surgery
- Encourage your child to help pack a bag for the hospital visit

[More information on the back](#)
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Remember:

You know your child best. Please share any information about your child with the nurse or doctor so they can best support your family during your stay at Sidra.

Child Life Specialists are experts in child development and can help your child to feel more comfortable about surgery. This can be done through education and preparation, teaching and practicing coping strategies or by providing play opportunities to help normalize their environment.

If you think your child would benefit from additional support at the time of their surgery, please ask your nurse or doctor to call your team's Child Life Specialist.

Sidra Medicine cares about your health. For reliable health information, visit our Patient Resource Center or find us online at www.sidra.org. The information in this leaflet should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and the advice of your doctor. Ask your healthcare provider about this information if you have questions.

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