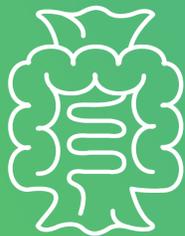




**TRANSPLANT UNWRAPPED
PRESENTS:**

Preparing Your Child for Surgery



**Transplant
UNWRAPPED**



www.transplantunwrapped.org



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Step One: Prepare Yourself



Learn as Much as You Can: Before speaking with your child about an upcoming surgery or procedure, educate yourself as much as possible about your child's condition, the procedure, and what will happen before and after, including pain control, wound care, and recovery time. **Do not be afraid to ask questions.** Your child's care team is there to answer any questions or quell any fears you may have.

Set the Tone: Make sure you **remain calm** when speaking to your child about an upcoming surgery or procedure. Children tend to model what they see in their parents and caregivers. If you stay calm, it can help to ease your child's anxiety.

Questions to Ask Before Surgery

Basic Questions:

- How long will the surgery or procedure take?
- How will I be updated during the surgery or procedure?
- How long do you expect my child to be in the hospital after the surgery?
- How will my child's pain be controlled after surgery?
- How can I best help my child after their surgery?
- Will my child wake up with any tubes or drains?
- Can my child tour the hospital before their surgery?
- Will my child need any therapies (PT, OT, Speech) after surgery?

Gastrointestinal Specific Questions:

- When do you expect my child to wean from TPN and/or tube feeds after their surgery or transplant?
- How often will my child need scopes to check for rejection after their intestinal or multivisceral transplant?
- Will my child wake up with an ostomy? If yes, will the ostomy be permanent or temporary?

Age-Specific Preparation Tips



Infant (0-12 months)

Common Causes of Stress

- Separation from parents.
- Unfamiliar caregivers, sights, sounds, smells.
- New routines.

How You Can Help:

- Remain calm and hold your baby when possible.
- When your baby cannot eat, try to hold or rock your baby.
- Bring a favorite blanket or pacifier to the hospital.
- Listen to their favorite music, sing or talk, or read a book.



Toddler (1-3 years)

When to Prepare:

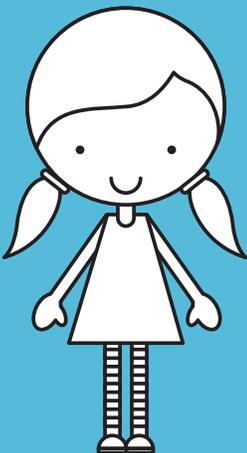
- Explain the procedure the day before to help avoid making your child overly anxious.

Common Causes of Stress

- Being left alone.
- Loss of normal comforts.
- Large amounts of medical equipment in the surroundings.

How You Can Help:

- Give your toddler the choice of bringing a toy or blanket.
- Explain the staff and their roles.
- Provide simple explanations.
- Read books about going to the hospital.



Pre-School (3-5 years)

When to Prepare:

- Explain the procedure the day before to help avoid making your child overly anxious.

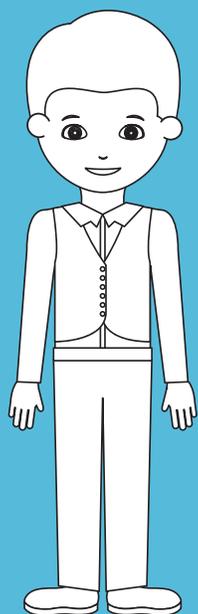
Common Causes of Stress

- Being left alone.
- Fear of needles and shots.
- Fear of, or the anticipation of pain.

How You Can Help:

- Explain the procedure in simple terms.
- Remind your child they did not do something wrong, and this is not a punishment.
- Give them choices, such as bringing a favorite toy.
- Check to see if your center allows tours of the hospital.

Age-Specific Preparation Tips



Elementary School (5-12 years)

When to Prepare:

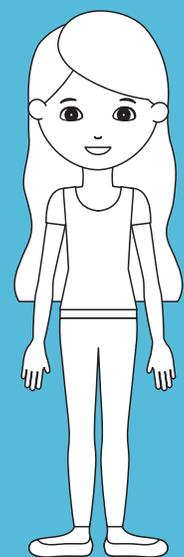
- Explain the procedure about one week in advance to help avoid making your child overly anxious.

Common Causes of Stress

- Loss of control.
- Fear of or anticipation of pain.
- Fear of needles.
- Fear of waking up during surgery.
- Fear of damage to their bodies.

How You Can Help:

- Remind your child they did not do something wrong, and this is not a punishment.
- Explain how the surgery will help your child.
- Give them choices; it provides them with a sense of control.
- See if your transplant center or hospital allows tours to become familiar with the environment.
- Remind your child the surgery is performed to correct a problem, not create a new one.



Teen (12-18 years)

When to Prepare:

- Involve a teenager from the very beginning. Teens like to be a part of the decision-making process.

Common Causes of Stress

- Loss of control and fear of the unknown.
- Changes in appearance.
- Fear of surgery, its risks, and associated pain.
- Fear of waking up during operation or fear of not waking up.

How You Can Help:

- Remind your child they did not do something wrong, and this is not a punishment.
- Explain how the surgery will help your child.
- Give them choices; it provides them with a sense of control.
- See if your transplant center or hospital allows tours to become familiar with the environment.
- Remind your child the surgery is performed to correct a problem, not create a new one.

Age-Specific Preparation Tips

A note about timing: Your child understands things based on their age and developmental level. The younger the child, the closer to the surgery or procedure you should prepare them.

Day Before the Procedure

One Week Before the Procedure

Involve From the Beginning



Toddler (1-3) and **Pre-School** (3-5)

Elementary School (5-12)

Teen (12-18)

Speaking to Your Child About Surgery

DO'S

- **Educate** your child about the surgery based on their age level.
- Ask your child what they know about the upcoming surgery so you have a baseline of what they understand.
- Use short and simple words, in a calm, quiet environment.
- Be thoughtful with your **choice of words** (Ex: instead of 'cut,' say 'create an opening.').
- **Encourage questions** and sharing of feelings.
- If your child asks a question about their upcoming surgery, be honest.
- Tell your child that going to the hospital does not mean that they have done something wrong.

DONT'S

- Do not give answers to questions you do not know the answers to. Tell your child you do not know, but will find out.
- Do not promise that your child will have no pain; rather, Tell your child they will be given medicine for pain and learn other ways to make pain go away.
- Do not make promises that you may not be able to keep about the operation and the hospital.

Kid-Friendly Surgical Terms and Explanations

Anesthesia: This is the medicine that makes you take a nap or stay asleep during surgery.

- When discussing anesthesia with your child, avoid using the phrase "put to sleep," as children often associate this with euthanizing a pet.
- Avoid using the word "gas."
- Tell your child they will take a nap after a special doctor (the 'sleep doctor' or anesthesiologist) gives them some medicine.
- Reassure your child that they will not see, feel, or hear anything during the surgery.

Anesthesiologist: The doctor who gives you the medicine to sleep during surgery.

Blood pressure cuff: This device is wrapped around your arm or your leg to check your blood pressure. The cuff squeezes your arm or leg when blood pressure is measured.

- Be sure to tell your child the cuff will get tight and squeeze their arm but will slowly get looser and should not hurt.

Electrodes: These are small sticky pads connected to wires placed on your chest or legs to track your heartbeat during surgery.

- Be sure to tell your child they do not hurt, but they may feel wet or cold.

Incision: The opening made on your body by the surgeon to do your surgery. The opening is closed when the surgery is done.

- Avoid using the phrase "cut open."

IV: A small plastic tube placed in a vein under your skin. It is used to give you medicine and water (fluids).

Mask: A soft, clear plastic mask sometimes is used to give anesthetic medicine. When explaining this form of anesthesia to a child, avoid using the word 'gas.' Instead, use a phrase like 'sleepy air.'

Pain medicine: Medicine to help you not hurt.

Kid-Friendly Surgical Terms and Explanations

Pulse ox (pulse oximeter): A small bandaid with a red light that allows doctors/nurses to know how much oxygen is in your blood.

Pre-Op: The room you wait in before surgery.

Operating room (OR): The room where surgery happens.

PACU/Recovery Room: the room you wake up in after surgery.

Surgeon: The doctor who does your surgery. A transplant surgeon is a special type of doctor that will do your transplant.

For an extensive listing of kid-friendly terms, please visit the [Transplant Unwrapped Kids Glossary.](#)

Interested in learning more?

Visit us on our [Main Website](#), where you will find helpful webinars, downloads, and support systems. In addition, our [Parent's and Caregiver's Page](#) on the Transplant Unwrapped Kid's site also offers helpful downloads and information.

Get in Touch!



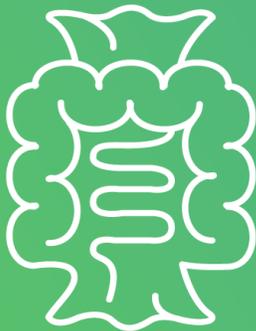
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2. Dowshen, S. (Ed.). (2014, November). Preparing Your Child for Surgery (for Parents) - Nemours KidsHealth. Retrieved June 15, 2020, from <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/hosp-surgery.html>
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