

How to Prepare Your Child for Their Surgery or Procedure

Having surgery or a procedure can be scary for children of any age. Your child's care team will do everything they can to make their surgery or procedure as comfortable as possible. This handout will tell you more about how you can help prepare your child.

Talking with your child about their surgery or procedure

Some children and teenagers like to learn more about what to expect, and others may not want to know too much. Every person is different, and you know your child best. When talking with your child about what to expect:

- Find a time when you and your child can talk without being interrupted.
- Speak honestly, positively, and in a way that your child can understand.
- Listen to your child's feelings and concerns.

Some things that your child may want to talk about include:

- The hospital.
- The surgery or procedure.
- The care they will be receiving.

It's OK if you don't know the answers to your child's questions. Your child's care team will be able to answer any questions that your child might have. It can be helpful to write down your family's questions and bring them along on the day of the surgery or procedure.

Preparing for your child's surgery by age

There are different ways to help your child prepare for their surgery or procedure based on their age. Depending on your child's age, please click on the link below to learn more about how to help them prepare for their surgery or procedure. **Please note that infants 0 to 2 years are not developmentally ready for education and preparation. The best way you can help them is by comforting and distracting them.**

- [How to Prepare Your Toddler – 1 to 3 years](#)
- [How to Prepare Your Pre-Schooler – 3 to 5 years](#)
- [How to Prepare Your School-Age Child – 5 to 12 years](#)
- [How to Prepare Your Adolescent – 12 to 18 years](#)

Additional resources

Resource name	Information
Saul Has Surgery	In this online story, a young child named Saul tells all about what happened when he had surgery, and how everything turned out OK.
Get Ready for Your Child's Surgery	This online article for parents shares things you can do to help both you and your child prepare for surgery.
Franklin Goes to the Hospital by Paulette Bourgeois	This book is a fun story that will help children prepare for the process of having surgery, This book is about Franklin, a young turtle who goes to the hospital and learns that even though he's feeling scared, he can still be brave.
Surgery on Sunday by Kat Harrison	This book is about Sunday, a child who is worried about her ear surgery, but soon learns surgery isn't so scary after all.
A Sleepy Tale: My First Surgery by Jennifer Maziad, MD	This book is a fun story that will help children prepare for the process of having surgery and receiving anesthesia.
S is for Surgery: A Kid's Surgery Book from A-Z by Dyan Fox	This activity book tells children about what might happen while they are at the hospital.

If you would like to discuss these or other ideas for preparing your child for their surgery or procedure, you can call the **Child Life office** at **(650) 497-8336**. Our Child Life Specialists can visit your child in the hospital and help them understand their surgery or procedure. They also help children feel more comfortable about their medical condition and why they are in the hospital.

Last Revised: 6/20/2023

Author: The Office of Patient and Family Education and Health Literacy

Medical Review: Procedures at Stanford Children's Health