

How to Prepare Your Adolescent for Their Surgery or Procedure

Having surgery or a procedure can be scary for children of any age. This handout will tell you more about how to prepare your adolescent for their surgery or procedure.

What your adolescent may be worried about at this age

Adolescents, or children between the ages of 12 to 18, want to be independent, they like privacy, and they want to be with their friends. This all changes when they go to the hospital, which may be hard for them. Some common things adolescents are worried about before a surgery or procedure include:

- Losing their independence and privacy.
- Fear their body will look different after surgery.
- Fear they will be in pain or wake up during their surgery.
- How long it will take to return to normal activities, routines, and being with their friends.

When you should prepare your adolescent

You can prepare your adolescent as **soon as it is decided** that the surgery or procedure is necessary.

How to prepare your adolescent

- **Have honest and continuing conversations with your adolescent:** Ask what they already know and understand or what questions they may have. Be careful about internet searches and videos that could give false information.
- **Help them to be involved in their own care:** Include them in appointments and talks with their doctor and others on their medical team about their care plan.

Talking with your child about their surgery or procedure

Some children 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.

Talking with your child about their surgery or procedure (continued)

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.

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** department at **(650) 497-8336**. Our Child Life Specialists can visit your child in the hospital and help them understand and deal with their surgery or procedure. They also help children feel more comfortable about their medical condition and why they are in the hospital.