

Surgery can be an Emotional Time

When the surgery is to be performed on your child, it is especially stressful. There are things you can do to reduce the chance that your fears and anxieties, as a parent, will be transferred to your child. Children who are less anxious and less fearful have an easier time before and after surgery. Remember, your emotions and anxiety level influence your child. Keep calm and in control of your emotions to help your child do the same. Follow the recommendations listed in this brochure to accomplish this goal. For more information, talk with your child's physician, surgeon, and nurse, as well as staff at the hospital or surgicenter.

Internet Resources

A listing of Children's Hospitals in the United States is available through the *National Association of Children's Hospitals and Related Institutions* (NACHRI): www.childrenshospitals.net

Available from AANA

Sweet Dreams at the Hospital: A Coloring and Activity Book for Children about to Undergo Surgery and Anesthesia. For more information contact the AANA Bookstore by phone (847) 655-1129; fax (847) 692-2051; or email: bookstore@aana.com

References

- Lamontagne LL, Hepworth JT, Byington KC, Chang CY. Child and parent emotional responses during hospitalization for orthopaedic surgery. *MCN Am J Matern Child Nurs.* 1997;22:299-303.
- Zuckerberg AL. Perioperative approach to children. *Pediatr Clin North Am.* 1994;41:15-29.

Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists

A Tradition of Quality Care

Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs) are anesthesia specialists who administer more than 32 million anesthetics to patients in the United States each year. The nurse anesthesia specialty has a history of nearly 150 years.

CRNAs represent a commitment to high standards in a demanding field. The educational requirements to become a CRNA are extensive. Prior to applying for admission to a graduate program in nurse anesthesia, a candidate must have a four-year bachelor of science degree in nursing or other appropriate baccalaureate degree, a current license as a registered nurse, and a minimum of one year of acute care nursing experience. The master's degree nurse anesthesia program itself is 24-36 months, depending on university requirements. CRNAs are board certified, and mandatory continuing education is required for recertification every two years.

Nurse anesthetists provide high-quality anesthesia services combined with personal concern for the health and welfare of patients. They are happy to assist you and offer information about what to expect with your anesthesia.



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The Parent's Role



Preparing for
Your Child's Surgery
and Anesthesia



To Help You and Your Child Before Surgery and Anesthesia

- Obtain accurate information about your child's procedure and about what to expect.
- Talk with the surgeon, without your child, to get all the information you need.
- Ask if there is a preadmission program for children and, if so, participate in it.
- Allow your child to share fears and concerns with you. Do not interrupt, minimize, or belittle your child. Let your child know that it is okay to feel afraid.
- Answer your child's questions honestly. If you don't know the answer, find out.
- Discuss the separation procedure with your doctor or nurse. How will your child be transferred from you to the health-care provider? For example, if your child is an infant, will you be able to hold your child until the sedative takes effect?



- Compare the time your child will be in surgery to the length of a favorite cartoon or video.
- Let your child know to expect some pain after the surgery by saying, "When they wake you up, it will probably hurt."
- Be present for your child's immediate postoperative recovery period, if recommended by the anesthesia professional. In some settings it may be possible to be present for the beginning of the anesthesia.
- Be there with your child. Sit at the bedside and comfort your child. If appropriate, snuggle, cuddle, hold, and touch your child.
- Ask about rooming-in with your child.
- Control your emotions and your behavior. Although you may be very upset and anxious, display a calm, soothing, trusting manner to your child.
- Try to avoid crying in front of your child.
- Take "2" for you! Take two minutes (or longer) out of sight of your child to express your emotions and focus yourself on what your child needs from you—support!
- Be honest. It is wrong to tell your child "it won't hurt" or that he/she is going to a birthday party when they are really going to the hospital. Telling your child that he or she is going to take a "nap" may raise fears later when the word "nap" is mentioned to your child. Instead, tell your child, "The doctor or nurse will give you medicine to make you sleep so it won't hurt when the doctor fixes your _____. The doctor and nurse will wake you up when they are done."



- Alleviate your child's fears. In no way should you threaten your child by saying something like "If you're bad, they're going to stick you with a needle."
- Give some facts calmly, but without being too graphic or detailed about what your child will experience. If you don't know the answer, say "We'll ask."
- Remember your role as a parent. Your emotions and behavior can have an impact on your child's outcome, so take your parental role very seriously.

Going Home

Ask your child's doctor and nurse what you can do to care for your child after surgery and anesthesia.

