

Parental Tips:

Before Your Grade School or Middle School Child Has Surgery

As a parent you are naturally concerned when your child needs to be hospitalized. The following information may be helpful to you and your child at this time:

- School age children want information about what is going to happen to them. Give simple explanations relative to the age of the child. The school age child is interested in the scientific approach, so use correct names for body parts, medicines, and treatment. Also, this age group will have misconceptions about what will happen in the hospital. Listen carefully to questions asked and conversation with peers about the hospital, and you may find issues about the hospital that may need clarification.
- At this age, most children having surgery are concerned primarily with anesthesia. Explanations about anesthesia need to include that all hospital patients wake up after having anesthesia and that they will not feel any pain during surgery.
- Provide your child with information about the procedure, equipment, length of recovery time, and possibilities of pain or soreness.
- Allow your child to play with equipment (i.e., stethoscope, blood pressure cuffs, ear molds, etc.) or express concerns. Also, allow your child opportunities to ask questions about the procedure, you can initiate discussion by asking, "Do you know why you're having an operation?" Provide simple answers. "It's not much fun to be sick and take medicine all the time. The doctor hopes that the operation will keep you from getting sick so often, and maybe you won't have to take medicine all the time".
- School age children relate to pain physically and can tell you its location on the body. They are afraid their bodies will be damaged. It's a good idea to prepare your child for some discomfort after an operation and to focus on things your child can do to feel better, such as taking medicine and drinking fluids. Relaxation techniques may also work with the school age child, such as imagery, thought stopping, deep breathing or rehearsal. (Your Child Life Specialist can assist with these techniques.)



- We suggest that you prepare your school age child the week before the operation or hospitalization. Let your child take a favorite toy or security item to the hospital.
- It's important that school age children to have rules. Even though your child may test the limits, rules at this time give your child a sense of security. Continue to encourage your child to ask questions.
- Your comfort level is important and can affect the care you give your child. When your child is going to be hospitalized, ask for information about how your child will look and feel after the operation or hospitalization and don't hesitate to ask questions if you have them.

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