

## Family Education Series

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### **Tips for Surgery or Hospitalization for Adolescents**

When a person is scheduled for surgery or hospitalization they may have some concerns or questions about what the surgery or hospitalization will mean for them. The following suggestions may be helpful to you and your family at this time:

- Probably the biggest concern for a teenager being hospitalized is the loss of contact with friends. Ask your friends to call or visit you. You can help by telling them when visiting hours are scheduled.
- We know that adolescents are very concerned with physical changes and worry about having a body that is different from others, so the nurse will help provide you and your parents with detailed information about surgery and what to expect.
- We feel that adolescents are young adults and want to be involved in their medical plan.
- We will teach you about your surgery in scientific terms and encourage you to read about your condition and surgery. We will also use body diagrams to explain where your operation will occur.
- Before a procedure (like drawing a sample of blood), we will help you prepare by saying, “we will begin testing now, relax and take a deep breath”. We also respect our patients’ privacy. Respect is very important to adolescents, and often freedom and independence are temporarily suspended during hospitalization.
- Some discomfort is unavoidable after an operation, but there are things you can do to help yourself feel better, such as taking medicine and drinking fluids. Also, relaxation techniques may be helpful. Ask your nurse or Child Life Specialist to help you with them.
- Parents need to respect their adolescent’s perception of pain, and regard any pain as real. Some adolescents are often afraid to tell someone that they are in pain. We want to be able to help your child control any discomfort, and we will provide a scale for your child to help us monitor the pain.

- When you are not feeling well you may notice that you are more easily upset, or feel angry or sad. This is normal when you don't feel well. When you feel better you will have more control over your emotions.
- We want to reassure children that their parents are there for them. Parents should be sure to give positive reinforcement for appropriate behavior.
- Be sure to ask questions and voice your concerns while you are hospitalized.
- We recommend a tour of the hospital to help you know what to expect. To arrange a tour, call 498-6635.

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