

Family Education Series

What to Know for Your Child's Upcoming Surgery - Cleft Palate Repair

A hospital visit can be an anxious time for both you and your child. This letter has been designed to help organize important information as well as help you decide what you will need to bring with you to the hospital. We at Boys Town National Research Hospital want your child's hospital stay to go smoothly, and make him/her – and you – as comfortable as possible.

What to Expect Before Surgery

The following are helpful tips to prepare yourself and your child for surgery:

- It is a good idea to verify pre-authorization with your insurance company.
- Schedule your child's history and physical appointment with your primary doctor. This needs to be completed no more than 30 days before surgery, but it is very helpful if it is not done too close to surgery, either. This allows our pre-admission department time to receive and review it.
- Make hotel arrangements if needed. Parents are allowed to stay at the hospital and a bed will be provided. However, if you are from out of town and will be bringing other siblings with you, one parent will need to stay at the hospital with your child while the other takes other siblings to stay elsewhere. (A list of hospital discounts available at local hotels is included.)
- Try to keep your child away from others with cold or flu-like symptoms. The doctors will want your child to be as healthy as possible and this will help avoid a cancellation should your child become ill.
- Avoid all second hand smoke exposure.
- Do not have your child's immunizations given just before surgery.

Eating and Drinking Before Surgery

In order to keep your child safe during surgery the anesthesiologist has ordered that your child not have any thing to eat or drink for a period of time before going to surgery. A nurse will call you approximately two days before your child is scheduled for surgery and will give you the exact times when he/she needs to stop eating and drinking.

Checking in to the Hospital

- The preoperative nurse will give you instructions about where to check in. After checking in to the hospital, you will be taken to a private patient room. This will be you and your

child's room for the length of your stay. This room has a television in it with a DVD player. We also have wireless internet available upon request. There is a waiting area with a television should you have additional guests.

- Hospital pajamas will be provided for your child to change into. Your floor nurse will then meet with you to admit your child for surgery. They will ask when he/she last ate and drank as well as confirm any medications that your child takes.
- Your child will be given a preoperative medication. This is an oral medication that has been prescribed for your child by the anesthesiologist.
- Your child will have an IV started. This is where a catheter is inserted into the vein so that fluids and medications can be delivered to your child. It will be started in the operating room after they are asleep. Your child will not feel it being inserted, however it will be there when they wake up and remain until they are discharged home.

During Your Child's Surgery

From the time that your child leaves for surgery to the time that he/she returns we ask that at least one person remain in the room. Your surgeon will be able to give you an approximate time for the length of surgery. After surgery your child will then go to the Recovery Room (wake up room). Here the nurses will closely monitor his/her vital signs as well as administer oxygen and pain medications as needed. The approximate time for your child's Recovery Room stay is 30-60 minutes. Keep in mind that this length of time is different for each child, but that the Recovery Room nurses will bring your child back to you as soon as your child is safely able to return to you.

After Surgery Care

- Your child will have many diet restrictions after surgery. The surgeon will order when your child is able to resume drinking, and will give instructions as to what kind of liquids he/she is allowed.
- Feeding your child will be different after surgery. Your nurse will show you methods to use as well as provide you with necessary tools for proper feeding. It is important that you get used to the new way of feeding your child as this will be the new methods for some time after surgery. Your nurse will start off doing the feeding for you, but then it is very important that you demonstrate to your nurse that you know how to do it as



well. This will help ease some of your nerves and/or fears of doing it by yourself once you are home.

- Pain medication will be given as needed. It is important to keep pain at a tolerable level so that your child is able remain drinking necessary fluids for proper healing.
- Your child may or may not have gauze packing sutured into place over the incision site on the roof of your child's mouth. This packing protects the incision but can make it difficult for your child to swallow. Your nurse will instruct you on ways to help your child cope with this packing and how to ensure his/her safety.
- Your child may remain sleepy after returning from surgery. It is common that the child returns to sleeping for 45 minutes or so after returning from the Recovery Room.
- Your child will have elbow splints on when they return to you. These are designed to help keep your child from being able to touch his/her incision which could damage or cause infection to the incision. **It is very important that you keep these on your child as the doctor has ordered.** Your nurse will provide instruction about how to apply and remove them for daily exercise and assessment.

What to Bring to the Hospital

For your child:

- **Nuby sippy cup.** This will be the only sippy cup that is allowed after surgery.
- **Multiple bibs.** Your child will have some oral drainage after surgery. In addition, feeding will be more difficult for your child right after surgery and he/she might spit up more.
- **Personal comfort item.** For example blanket, stuffed animal or toy.
- **DO NOT bring your child's pacifier.** This will NOT be able to be used after surgery.
- **One of your child's bottles with formula.** This is to be used if by chance your child's surgery is canceled. This way he/she can drink right away.
- **A few soothing CDs,** if this is something that might sooth your child as well as make them feel more at home or relaxed.
- **Movies that your child enjoys.** We have several choices available, but this will help ensure that your child has his/her favorite movie available. Both VHS and DVD players are available.

For you:

- **Personal care items.** A shower is provided but please bring any personal toiletries that you might need during your child's stay. (i.e., shampoo, hairbrush, toothbrush, body wash, any medications that you take).
- **A couple of changes of comfortable clothes.** Stay away from light colored clothes as your child will have some drainage after surgery that might leak onto your clothes as you are holding or caring for him/her.
- **A camera.** Many parents wish to bring a camera to document this part of their child's life.
- **A few items that can help you pass the time.** Surgery and recovery room time can be a long wait for parents waiting to see their child. Feel free to bring a deck of cards, a book, crossword puzzles or a movie that might help pass time.