

The American Society of Anesthesiologists (ASA) issued the following news release:

10 Steps to Help Parents Prepare Their Child for Surgery

Every year more than 1 million children and their parents in the United States face the anxiety and uncertainty of surgery, according to the National Center for Health Statistics.

To help make the experience go as smooth as possible the American Society of Anesthesiologists (ASA) has released 10 steps parents should take to prepare for a procedure.

Additional information is available at www.LifelinetoModernMedicine.com, the ASA's Web site dedicated to educating and empowering the public about anesthesiology.

"Undergoing surgery can be a source of stress for a person of any age, but when the patient is a child, a whole new layer of sensitivity is added," said ASA President Roger A. Moore, M.D.

"The anesthesiologist, surgeon and entire care team do their best to make a child's visit to the hospital as pleasant as possible, but parents also have a key role to play in the process. To this end, we urge parents to begin preparing their child as soon as a decision is made to perform surgery."

Children tolerate surgery and anesthesia better when they are well-

prepared.(1) Anything parents can do to relieve these anxieties and to inform their child about the coming events in the hospital and operating room will greatly improve the child's experience.

10 Tips to Help Prepare Your Child for Surgery

1. Inform yourself.

Before you can inform your child about what to expect, you must learn what to expect. It is very important to learn about your child's surgery before the procedure by discussing it with the physician(s) overseeing your child's care. Among the key questions are:

- Can you walk me through the procedure?
- How long will the surgery take?
- How long can I be with my child before surgery?
- Can I be with my child during the surgery?
- Can I be with my child when the anesthesia is administered?
- Will my child be sedated before the anesthesia is given?
- How will the anesthesia be administered?
- Who will administer my child's anesthesia?
- What type of anesthesia will be used?
- What are the risks associated with this type of anesthesia?
- How often are there complications with this type of anesthesia?
- Does my child have any special risks?
- Will my child have a visible scar?
- When and where can I see my child after surgery?
- How long will it take my child to wake up from general anesthesia or regain feeling in the area that local or regional anesthesia was used?
- Will my child feel pain or discomfort after surgery?
- What can be done about any pain or discomfort my child may feel?
- How soon after the surgery can my child come home?

2. Provide age-appropriate information to your child.

The older your child, the more important it becomes to provide specific information about the procedure. Tell your child that he or she will be in unfamiliar surroundings but will meet many friendly doctors and nurses, and that you will be nearby even if you're not right there every minute. Ask your doctor for advice on communicating the specifics of the surgery to your child. Depending on the type of procedure, there are a number of resources online and at your library to help you guide your child through the process.

3. Accentuate the positive.

Surgery should be conveyed in as positive a light as possible. While it may be uncomfortable, we are all fortunate to have the medical advancements that allow health problems to be corrected. Although a hospital can seem like an intimidating environment, every person whom you and your child will encounter is professionally dedicated to making patients well again. Also, be sure to emphasize to your child that the discomfort felt will be temporary and the surgery will actually allow him or her to feel better over the long term.

4. Tell your child what to expect after surgery.

No one feels completely themselves after surgery. Children need to know that they might experience some discomfort afterward. Let them also know it's normal not to remember anything about the surgery. It is also important to let them know that they will continue to feel better as the days go by.

5. Rally your family and friends to provide encouragement.

Children relish positive attention. Best wishes in the form of visits, phone calls or cards from family and friends can really lift a child's spirits. Many relatives and friends will think of this on their own, but it never hurts to suggest it. You may also promise a special party or treat for the child to look forward to after surgery.

6. Distract your child on the day of surgery.

Spending too much time focused on surgery the day of the procedure will only give your child an opportunity to get nervous. Make a plan to keep your child distracted that day. One idea is to offer your child a number of new toys to help keep him or her occupied. This should help keep your child's mind off of the upcoming procedure.

7. Work with the surgical team.

The anesthesiologist and entire surgical team have your child's best interest in mind. Be open and honest with them so they can make the best possible decisions for your child's situation. The anesthesiologist's prior experiences with other children give them a keen insight into your child's potential anxiety about the procedure. Take cues from them and work together to keep your child calm.

8. Take care of yourself too.

Having a child undergo surgery can be very stressful on a parent. Since you are the primary source of comfort for your child, it is very important that you take care of yourself. Get plenty of rest and seek support from friends and family. Accept offers of help with the everyday chores of life so you can focus on your child. Manage your stress throughout the process and seek professional help if necessary.

9. Stay calm (even though the process can be stressful)

Children are greatly influenced by their parent's verbal and non-verbal cues. Nothing calms a child more than a confident parent. Your composure as a parent is essential. Although it is natural for parents to have anxiety when their child is having surgery, it is best not to convey this to the child. Presenting a calm demeanor extends to non-verbal cues as well. Children are surprisingly adept at interpreting body language, tone of voice and facial expressions.

10. Stay vigilant in the weeks after surgery.

After a successful surgical outcome, it is easy to fall back into a daily routine and forget to watch out for post-surgical complications.

On occasion, complications do occur, often well after the surgery. It's important to closely follow your physician's post-op instructions.

PLEASE FORWARD THIS MESSAGE to any lists or individuals who might find it useful.

Forwarded by Ken Pope, PhD on July 22, 2009