Preparing Your Child for Surgery

The thought of your child needing surgery can be daunting for both you and your child. Preparing your child for any surgical procedure can make your child less anxious and will tolerate surgery and anesthesia better. Here are some tips to help prepare you and your child for the surgical experience at Miller Children’s Pediatric Surgical Center.

• Ask questions of your child’s surgeon, anesthesiologist and nursing team in order to better understand what your child will experience. This will give you confidence and enable you to talk calmly to your child.
• Speak honestly with your child about what will happen.
• Listen to your child’s concerns about surgery.
• Encourage your child to participate in medical play (Child Life Specialists are trained to help young patients through medical play).

• Use a play medical kit at home to familiarize your child with tools the care team may use, such as a stethoscope, masks and gloves.
• Include siblings in preparation and encourage them to ask questions too.
• Let your child know that the surgery is being done to help them, and that after surgery, they will start to feel better.
• Reassure your child that they have done nothing wrong and that surgery is not a punishment.
• Remind your child that they will return home soon.
• Read books about children being hospitalized. Children can often relate better to characters.
• Ask to accompany your child into the operating room.

The more you prepare your child for surgery, the more they will understand what is going to happen and will reduce their anxiety about surgery.

More tips on the back!
Preparing the Night Before the Surgery

- Please be sure that your child has a bath or shower and has adequate rest the night before surgery.
- Your child will not be able to eat or drink after a designated time the evening before surgery.
- You will be instructed when to stop your child from eating/drinking and when to take prescribed medications.
- This includes water, gum and candy. Please supervise the child brushing their teeth to ensure toothpaste and/or water is not swallowed on the day of surgery.

Pre-Surgical Tour

The Child Life Program at Miller Children’s offers pre-surgical tours to help prepare children for surgery, to understand what is going to happen and to reduce their anxieties about having surgery. The pediatric surgical care team strongly encourages families scheduled for a procedure to participate. During the tour, families will meet members of the care team and get the opportunity to experience the sights and sounds of the admission unit, surgery and recovery areas.

- Take time later to discuss what happened on the tour with your child.

Please call the Child Life Program at (562) 933-8060 to schedule a tour or visit MillerChildrens.org/SurgeryTour to take a virtual tour at home.