

Talking to your child about their surgery

Prepare your child by following these tips.

Preparing toddlers/preschoolers

- Give very simple explanations and avoid scary words (e.g., cut, shot, hurt, put to sleep).
- Tell your child about their surgery the day before or the morning of their surgery.
- Reassure your child you will be with them at the hospital and you will come home together.
- Talk about things you may see and hear at the hospital.
- Read books about going to the hospital.
- Allow them to bring a comfort item to the hospital.

Preparing school-age children

- Tell your child about their surgery at least a week before their surgery day.
- Talk about the surgery and its benefits (e.g., “The special tubes will help your ears to feel better.”)
- Read books about going to the hospital.
- Encourage your child to ask questions.
- Allow them to bring a comfort item to the hospital.
 - If possible, provide your child with some choice (e.g., “What kind of popsicles would you like to have at home for after the surgery?”).

Books to help prepare your child for their surgery

Toddlers and preschoolers

- *Elmo’s World: Meet the People in Your Neighborhood! Doctors!* By Sesame Street
- *Pooh Plays Doctor* by K.W. Zoehfeld

School-age children

- *Chris Gets Ear Tubes* by Betty Pace (ages 5-7)
- *Clifford Visits the Hospital* by Norman Bridwell (ages 4-8)
- *Do I Have to Go to the Hospital?* By Pat Thomas (ages 5-8)
- *Franklin Goes to the Hospital* by Paulette Bourgeois (ages 4-7)
- *Harry Goes to the Hospital* by Howard J. Bennett (ages 6-8)
- *A Hospital Just for Us* by Patricia Calvert (ages 6-8)
- *Let’s Talk About Going to the Hospital* by Johnston (ages 6-8)
- *Miffy in Hospital* by Mercer Mayer (ages 3-8)
- *Rita Goes to the Hospital* by Martine Davison (ages 5-7)

(Adapted from IWK Child Life Services Resource, 2012)