

Developmental Stage: Infant (Birth – 1 year)

Getting Your Baby Ready for Surgery

Your baby is having surgery and it's normal for you to feel nervous. When you feel prepared and calm, you can best help support and comfort your baby before his/her surgery. This handout will go over common stressors your baby might feel and give you tips on how to get yourself and your baby ready for surgery. It will also give you a list of things to bring from home that can help your baby feel more relaxed and comfortable.

WHAT ARE COMMON STRESSORS MY BABY MIGHT FEEL BEFORE SURGERY?

Some **common stressors** (things or events that cause stress) your baby might feel before surgery include:

- Being separated from parents
- Being around unfamiliar people, like the doctors and nurses
- New and different routines
- Interrupted sleep
- New sights, smells and sounds

HOW CAN I HELP MY BABY BEFORE SURGERY?

There are many ways you can help your baby get ready for his/her surgery.

- **Make sure you and your baby get enough sleep before the surgery.**
- **Try to stay relaxed for your baby.** Babies can pick up on your and others' stress levels. If you remain calm, there is a good chance your baby will also be calm.
- **Distract your baby by rocking, walking or comforting him/her.** It can be hard to comfort your baby when he/she is hungry and thirsty. Distracting him/her in other ways, like rocking, singing or talking in a soothing voice, can help your baby relax.

HOW CAN I HELP COMFORT MY BABY WHILE HE/SHE RECEIVES ANESTHESIA?

For most babies, the **anesthesia** (medicine to help your child to sleep) is provided through a mask. The mask does not hurt and goes over his/her nose and mouth. In some cases, you might be able to stay with your baby while he/she receives anesthesia. The **anesthesiologist** (doctor who gives anesthesia) will talk with you about this step.

As your baby is getting anesthesia, hearing will be the last of the 5 senses to "fall asleep" before surgery. You may be able to comfort your baby by reading him/her a book, playing music, singing or simply talking to him/her in a soft voice.

WHAT SHOULD I BRING FROM HOME?

Here are a few things you should bring from home:

- **Your baby's favorite blanket, pacifier or bottle.** Having your baby's favorite things from home can be comforting to him/her before and after surgery.
- **A stroller and/or car seat to bring your baby home.**
- **Bottles of breast milk or baby formula.** Your baby will likely be able to eat his/her normal diet when he/she is ready to eat after surgery.

Did you know?

You can watch a video on the MGHfC website to help you and your baby get ready for surgery.

Go to www.massgeneralforchildren.org/getting-ready-for-surgery to learn more.

We are always here to help!

Our Child Life Specialist can also help you get you and your baby ready for surgery. Please call our Child Life Specialist at **617-724-1211** if you:

- Have questions about how to get your baby ready for surgery
- Would like ideas or language to help get your baby's older sibling ready for the surgery
- Would like to share important information about your baby with the Child Life Specialist
- Want to set up a tour of the Center for Perioperative Care before surgery

If your baby is admitted to the hospital after surgery, there are also Child Life Specialists on the inpatient units.

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Center for Perioperative Care

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www.massgeneralforchildren.org/surgery

For more information please call

617-726-0270