

Developmental Stage: Teens (12-18 years)

# Getting Your Teen Ready for Surgery

**Your teen 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 teen before his/her surgery. This handout will go over when to tell your teen about his/her surgery and common stressors your teen might feel. It will also give you tips on how to get him/her ready for surgery and offers a list of things to bring from home that can help your teen feel more relaxed and comfortable.**

## WHEN SHOULD I START TO GET MY TEEN READY FOR SURGERY?

Teens usually like being involved in decisions about their health. Be a partner with your teen when making decisions about his/her health. You and your teen can start learning about and getting ready for the surgery as soon as you decide to have surgery.

## WHAT ARE COMMON STRESSORS MY TEEN MIGHT FEEL BEFORE SURGERY?

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

- Loss of control
- Changes in the way he/she looks
- Body image (how others think he/she looks)
- Privacy
- Fear of needles or vaccines
- Fear of pain or the possibility of pain
- Fear of waking up during surgery
- Fear of not waking up after surgery
- Fear of the unknown

## HOW CAN I HELP MY TEEN BEFORE SURGERY?

There are many ways you can help your teen get ready for his/her surgery, including:

- **Talking openly and often about what's going to happen.** Tell the truth when answering questions. Teens can become upset if they feel like they are being lied to. Make sure your teen knows that he/she can ask any questions and that there aren't any silly questions.
- **Having your teen write down questions for the doctors and nurses.** This can help your teen feel like he/she is taking part in decisions about his/her health. It also helps your teen feel prepared for surgery.
- **Explaining the surgery in different ways.** Sometimes, teens don't feel comfortable saying that they don't understand the surgery. Explain the surgery in different ways while being careful not to make your teen feel uncomfortable.
- **Encourage your teen to read books about going to the hospital or having surgery.**
- **Encourage your teen to bring his/her favorite thing from home, like music, books or electronics.**
- **Respect your teen's need for privacy and concern about body image.**
- **Watch the "Getting Ready for Surgery" video, made by MGHfC.** This video answers many common questions about what to expect before, during and after surgery at MGHfC. You can find the video link on the back of this handout in the yellow "Did you know?" box.

## WHAT CAN MY TEEN DO AT THE HOSPITAL TO BE MOST COMFORTABLE ON THE DAY OF SURGERY?

Some things that teens have done to be most comfortable on the day of surgery are:

- **Bringing their favorite thing from home, like music, a book or a game**
- **Reading a book**
- **Playing a game or an electronic**
- **Guided imagery or thinking of a “happy place”**
- **Practicing deep breathing by saying, “Breathe in through your nose for 5 seconds, breathe out through your mouth for 5 seconds.”**
- **Telling stories or jokes**
- **Watching a movie or TV**
- **Listening to music**

### ***We are always here to help!***

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

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

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

### ***Did you know?***

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

Go to [www.massgeneralforchildren.org/getting-ready-for-surgery](http://www.massgeneralforchildren.org/getting-ready-for-surgery) to learn more.

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## **Center for Perioperative Care**

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[www.massgeneralforchildren.org/surgery](http://www.massgeneralforchildren.org/surgery)

For more information please call

**617-726-0270**