

## Parental Tips:

# Preparing for Your School-aged Child's Surgery

### Common worries and concerns for school-aged children

- Loss of privacy and independence
- Anesthesia and waking up during surgery
- Body image and permanent damage to their bodies during surgery
- Pain (fear of needles and medical equipment)
- Losing control and potentially doing or saying something embarrassing

### Ways to support your school-aged child

- **Prepare your child for surgery:** Start talking with your child about the upcoming surgery one to two weeks in advance. Provide simple explanations relative to your child's age. When talking about the surgery, use correct names for body parts, medicines, and treatment. Provide simple information about the procedure, equipment, length of recovery time, and possibility of pain or soreness. Offer reassurance about anesthesia that your child will be asleep during the procedure and will wake up after the procedure.
- **Listen closely:** Your child may have questions or concerns about the upcoming surgery. Answer your child's questions honestly and validate his/her feelings. Also, listen to conversations with peers about the upcoming surgery; you may discover misconceptions about the hospital that need clarification.
- **Validate feelings:** Your child may have a lot of feelings about surgery day. Encourage your child to talk about his/her feelings and worries to you and staff at the hospital. Let your child know those feelings are normal and it is okay to be nervous, scared, or even cry.
- **Practice relaxing:** Your child may be in pain after surgery. It's a good idea to prepare your child for some discomfort after surgery and to focus on things your child can do to feel better, such as taking medicine and drinking fluids. Discuss relaxation techniques that may work for your child such as deep breathing or imagining your favorite place. Let your child know the doctors and nurses will have a plan for how to deal with pain and discomfort.
- **Bring comfort items from home:** Let your child pick out a comfort item to bring to the hospital. Allow your child to pack a small hospital bag filled with some of his/her favorite toys and activities.

If your child is anxious about the upcoming surgery, you can visit our website for additional support and videos to help prepare your child for the surgery ([www.boystownhospital.org/patientServices/Pages/Child-Life.aspx](http://www.boystownhospital.org/patientServices/Pages/Child-Life.aspx)). You can contact the Child Life Department for additional support at 531-355-6040.