

# 10 tips to prepare your child for their surgery/procedure

## preschoolers through early elementary school

1. **Be honest.** Stress that children don't know about before is harder to deal with than stress they know about and are ready for. Not telling your child about his or her surgery can be worse than telling him or her.
2. **Listen.** Allow your child to tell you why they think they are coming to the hospital and what they will be doing. Once you have a better understanding of what they know, you can explain it better and clear up any misunderstandings.
3. **Play doctor.** About a week before, start playing doctor with your child. Children learn and make sense of their world through play. Playing doctor with your child will help him or her understand and begin to process the idea of surgery and coming to the hospital. Preschoolers often view coming to the hospital and surgery as punishment for something they have done wrong. Keep this in mind when talking to your child about coming to the hospital.
4. **Let them know they won't be alone.**
5. **Help them understand why they are coming.** For example, if your child is having ear tubes, let them know they are getting them so they don't have ear infections any more.
6. **Talk about what might be different about their body after the procedure.** If your child is spending the night, let them know. It can be helpful to tell your child they will be having a sleepover at the hospital. This is a great way to take the scariness out of it. Make sure they know that you will be at the sleepover with him or her.
7. **Answer your child's questions honestly and simply.**
8. **Show them pictures of the hospital.**
9. **Bring his or her favorite toy, blanket, or pillow from home** for him or her to take back to the operating room.
10. No matter how they act upon arriving to the hospital, **keep being positive with them and remind them how brave they are being.**

