

# Preparing Your Child for Surgery: Infants and Toddlers (0-2 Years)

Coming to the hospital can be a difficult experience for children of any age as there are many new sights, sounds and unfamiliar faces. Preparing your child ahead of their hospital visit can help decrease his/her anxiety and fear and increase his/her ability to cope with what is happening. It can be difficult to find the right words to say to your child so we have created this information sheet to help you prepare your child for surgery in a way that provides simple, honest and accurate information.

## Infants 0-1 year

### Your child's development at this age:

- Depend on the support and presence of caregivers
- Learn by exploring their environment
- May feel uncomfortable by new people, new spaces and hospital equipment
- May be upset before surgery due to hunger or thirst



### How you can help your child:

- Provide positive touch to your child by holding them or singing/speaking to them
- Speak in a calming voice
- Bring familiar items such as a pacifier, teddy bear or favourite toy

## Toddlers 1-2 years

### Your child's development at this age:

- Depend on the support and presence of caregivers
- Learn by exploring their environment
- May feel uncomfortable by new people, new spaces and hospital equipment
- May be upset before surgery due to hunger or thirst

### How you can help your child:

- Prepare your child 1-2 days before the surgery by:
  - Use a toy doctor's kit and stuffed animal or doll to help teach your child about hospital items
  - Read books about visiting the hospital
  - Talk to your child about the "sleep medicine" (anesthesia) so he/she knows they will have a short sleep at the hospital

[More information on the back](#)  
Development Date. September 2020

- When possible, allow your child to make choices throughout their hospital stay to increase his/her sense of control
- Remain calm as your child can sense your emotions
- Provide positive touch to your child by holding him/her or singing and speaking to him/her
- Bring familiar items such as a pacifier, teddy bear or favorite toy

**Remember:**

You know your child best. Please share any information about your child with the nurse or doctor so they can best support your family during your stay at Sidra.

Child Life Specialists are experts in child development and can help your child to feel more comfortable about surgery. This can be done through education and preparation, teaching and practicing coping strategies or by providing play opportunities to help normalize their environment.

If you think your child would benefit from additional support at the time of their surgery, please ask your nurse or doctor to call your team's Child Life Specialist.

Sidra Medicine cares about your health. For reliable health information, visit our Patient Resource Center or find us online at [www.sidra.org](http://www.sidra.org). The information in this leaflet should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and the advice of your doctor. Ask your healthcare provider about this information if you have questions.

Development Date. September 2020