

honest before surgery most often makes honesty after the procedure easier because no false hopes were created.

It is best to deliver information in small amounts to let the child pursue additional answers. For example, some children ask about what happens when part of the tumor is left. An honest reply is that after surgery the physician will try to shrink the tumor with special x-rays and medicines. Delay a further explanation of irradiation or chemotherapy until a decision regarding these treatments is made.

The hair is usually shaved in the operating room just before surgery, or sometimes in the child's room, usually the night before surgery. When shaving is done with the child awake, the procedure is approached in a sensitive, positive way. Showing children how they look at different stages of the process helps them prepare for the final appearance. Once the hair is clipped short or shaved, offer the child a cap or scarf. Take every precaution to provide privacy during the procedure. Depending on the child's immediate adjustment to the hair loss, the nurse may introduce the idea of wearing a wig until the hair grows in, particularly if additional irradiation or chemotherapy is anticipated.

Also tell children about the size of the dressing. Usually the entire scalp is covered to maintain tight wound closure, even if a small incision is made. Infratentorial head dressings may be attached to the upper back and extend forward to the neck to maintain slight extension and alignment as a precaution against wound rupture. Applying a similar dressing or "special hat" to a doll is often a less traumatic way of demonstrating the physical appearance.

Children also need a brief explanation of how they will feel after surgery and where they will be. Ordinarily they will return to a special intensive care unit, which they may visit beforehand, depending on hospital policy. They should be aware that they may be sleepy for some time after surgery and that a headache is likely, although it should last only a few days.

Parents need similar explanations before surgery, especially in terms of special equipment used in the intensive care unit, dressings, and their child's behavior. For example, they should know that it is not unusual for the child to be lethargic for a few days after surgery. The nurse may wish to encourage less frequent visiting during this period so that parents can rest and be able to