

Preparing Your 13- to 18-Year-Old for Surgery



Your teenager is having surgery. You may have concerns about how they will cope. Knowing what to expect can help you and your teen feel better about surgery.



How will your teen react?

- Teens may worry about pain from surgery. They may also worry if surgery will affect their appearance.
- Teens may be concerned about missing school and being away from friends.
- Teens like having space and privacy from parents and other adults. Being sick or in the hospital can make them feel a loss of privacy and control.

How can you help your teen get ready for surgery?

Teens are old enough to understand the details of surgery. Talk with them about surgery as soon as it is scheduled. Here are some ways you can help them get ready for surgery:

- Respect your teen's opinions and their right to make choices. Let them be a part of decisions about their surgery.
- Talk with your teen about what will happen in the hospital. Help your teen understand the reason for surgery. Refer them to books or online resources to learn more about it, if needed.
- Take a tour of the surgery department with your teen if the hospital has this option. Encourage your teen to talk with hospital staff and ask questions.
- Respect your teen's privacy. They may want to speak with hospital staff without you there. Hospital staff may also need to talk with your teen privately about health issues that can affect the safety of surgery.
- Be available for support when needed.
- Encourage your teen to express how they are feeling.
- If your teen requests it, ask hospital staff if siblings or friends can visit.
- Keep routines as normal as possible in the hospital. This is especially important if your teen is admitted into the hospital for a long time. Encourage them to keep up with schoolwork and to keep in touch with

family and friends.

Child life specialist

Many hospitals have a child life specialist. This person is specially trained to help children understand and cope with their hospital experience. Families can arrange to see a child life specialist when their child is scheduled for surgery. The child life specialist can help explain surgery, answer questions, and point your teenager to other resources, if needed. Parents and siblings are encouraged to attend and be part of these sessions.

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