



## Preparing your child for surgery

Surgery can be scary for you and your child. Knowing what to expect and how to prepare can help.





Thank you for trusting Beacon Health System for your child's surgery. Our highly trained nurses, surgeons and anesthesiologists will provide your child compassionate and advanced surgical care.

Depending on the campus, your child may be seen by a child life specialist who will use age-appropriate therapies to help them understand and cope with the stress of surgery. And we'll be here for you and your child every step of the way.

Keeping your child as safe and comfortable as possible starts with preparedness. The information provided here will help you and your child prepare for surgery.

# Make surgery less scary for your child

Understanding how surgery works helps most kids feel more comfortable. And that starts with talking to them. How you talk to your child will depend on their age, so use the following strategies as appropriate.

## Infant – newborn to 12 months old

- Bring familiar items from home for after surgery, such as a favorite blanket, toy, pacifier, bottle or sippy cup.
- Stay calm and relaxed. Your child won't understand explanations about surgery, but they will sense your emotions and worries.

## Toddler – 1 to 3 years old

- Tell your child about their surgery one to two days before.
- Use simple words.
- Allow choices. Ask which stuffed animal to bring or book to read.
- Remind your child that they will see you after surgery in the “wake-up” room.
- Reassure your child that you will be waiting for them.





### **Preschool-age – 3 to 5 years old**

- Talk to your preschooler three to five days before surgery.
- Use simple words.
- Ask your child their thoughts and feelings about surgery.
- Give reassurance that going to the hospital is not a punishment.
- Incorporate play. Playing doctor, nurse or hospital may help your child cope.

### **School-age – 5 to 12 years old**

- Talk to your child a week or two before surgery.
- Be honest and realistic.
- Let your child ask questions and talk about their concerns.
- Give simple explanations of things your child might see, hear, smell and touch.

### **Adolescent – 12 to 18 years old**

- Encourage your teen to ask questions and participate in decision-making.
- Give honest information about the surgery.
- Respect your teen's need for privacy.



## The day before surgery

A nurse will call to tell you what time to arrive, when your child needs to stop eating and drinking and other important information. **If you have questions about the surgery, call the surgery center and a nurse will assist you. Call 574.647.6700 for Beacon Children's Hospital or 574.523.3192 for Elkhart General Hospital Outpatient Surgery.**

## Take these steps to prepare for your child's surgery the day before.

- Write your child's medical information including allergies, medical history and medications.
- Write any questions you have about the surgery.
- Pack your insurance card and ID.
- Pack a bag with all the supplies your child may need:
  - » Diapers or extra underwear, formulas, bottles, sippy cups and pacifiers.
  - » Comfort items such as clean blankets or toys that may be taken to the operating room.
  - » Loose, comfortable clothing for your child to wear after the surgery.

## The day of surgery

You will be asked to arrive earlier than your child's scheduled surgery time. This gives you and your child plenty of time to prepare for surgery and gives us extra time to answer your questions.

When you arrive, stop at the Admitting/Registration Department. There, you'll review personal and insurance information. Please have your ID and insurance information ready. Afterward, you'll be given directions to the Outpatient Surgery Center. You must check in at the desk when you arrive.

## It's almost time for surgery

Right before your child's surgery, a registered nurse will show you and your child to a private outpatient surgery room. This is their "wake-up" room, and it's where you'll be reunited after the surgery. For patients at Beacon Children's Hospital, a Child Life Specialist may also be present throughout your child's surgery journey. These experts help your child understand the procedure and develop healthy coping mechanisms to handle any related stress.

In the outpatient surgery room, you will be asked about your child's medical history. Their blood pressure and temperature will also be checked. Any lab work requested by your child's surgeon will be completed, and an IV will be started if necessary.



Your child may be feeling nervous or scared at this time. Reassure them that this surgery is the best way to get them healthy – and that the experts on their team have lots of experience treating kids like them.



## A visit with the surgeon and anesthesiologist

Next, your child's surgeon and anesthesiologist will visit you and your child. Your child may be given medicine that makes them drowsy. This helps make surgery easier and less stressful for them. Remind your child that you will be waiting for them in their private room when their surgery is over!

## Receiving anesthesia

The operating room will be cold, so your child will receive a warm blanket for comfort. The nurse and anesthesiologist will place normal monitoring devices on your child. These may include a blood pressure cuff, a finger sensor to monitor oxygen levels and EKG patches to read your child's heart rate.

Your child will also receive anesthesia which puts them into a sleep-like state. They aren't able to feel pain or move when anesthetized. This keeps them safe and comfortable during surgery.



## Heading to the operating room

We offer many ways for your child to go back to the operating room – and on their own terms. This helps them feel more comfortable and in control of their surgery. Children at Beacon Children's Hospital can choose to ride back in a wagon or wheelchair, or they can walk. At Elkhart General Hospital, children can choose to ride in a wheelchair or walk. For children one year old or younger, a nurse may carry them to the operating room.

Your child's anesthesiologist will determine how to begin anesthesia. One option is placing a needle in the child's arm or hand with IV tubing attached. Another option is letting the child breathe anesthesia gas through a mask placed near the mouth and nose. The anesthesiologist will talk with you about your child's plan of care.

## Post-anesthesia care unit (PACU)

After surgery, the anesthesiologist and a registered nurse will take your child to the recovery room. The process of waking from anesthesia can take a while, depending on the child and the procedure. Due to the privacy needs of other patients, loved ones are not allowed in the recovery room. A recovery room nurse will provide compassionate and personalized care to your child, and we'll reunite you as soon as possible.

## Returning to the outpatient surgery room

After your child is ready, they will be brought back to you in a private outpatient surgery room. This is their “wake-up” room. It’s normal for your child to feel tired and be difficult to comfort. After an additional nap, they should feel much better.

As your child continues to wake up, our staff will evaluate when they can go home based on the doctor’s care plan. This amount of time varies because all patients have different needs.

## Going home

When your child’s surgeon determines they are ready to go home, you will be given your child’s discharge instructions. These will include care plans, follow-up appointments and other helpful information to make your child’s transition home easier. Our team will go over these instructions with you before you leave to answer any questions you have. We want to keep your child healthy, safe and comfortable on their road to recovery.



# Thank you

We understand how stressful surgery can be, and we are with you every step of the way. We hope all of your questions have been answered and that you and your child feel more prepared and comfortable with the upcoming surgery.



For more information,  
call Beacon  
Children's Hospital  
Outpatient Surgery  
at 574.647.6700 or  
Elkhart General Hospital  
Outpatient Surgery at  
574.523.3192.

***We look forward to caring  
for your child.***



## Beacon Pediatric Outpatient Surgery



**Beacon Children's Hospital**

615 N. Michigan St.

South Bend, IN 46601

574.647.6700



**Elkhart General Hospital**

600 East Blvd.

Elkhart, IN 46514

574.523.3192



**[beaconhealthsystem.org](https://beaconhealthsystem.org)**