

Parental Consideration: When talking to kids about surgery, you don't need to focus on the actual/literal "hows" of what happens when they are asleep, but help them understand the "why" and what they will actually experience (the before surgery and the after surgery)

Let them know they will be getting surgery **1 day prior**, and remind them the morning of the appointment. Talk about the concrete steps for the day/experience:

- where you are going, how you are getting there
- very simply what will happen (see the doctor, get sleep medicine, wake up with bandaid)
- what will happen following the event (go home to rest, go pick up sibling from school, watch movie?)

Using play or a book to initiate preparation for surgery allows for repetition of the information, and helps them to understand the routine of the beginning, middle and end for experience.

When toddlers ask...

What is surgery?

"When doctors help your body"

"You will not be awake while the doctors are helping/fixing your body, the doctors will give you medicine before surgery to make your body sleep, so you wont feel anything. **see anesthesia script

Why do I have to have surgery?

Make a concrete connection by pointing out something they have been experiencing -

What symptoms are they feeling? What is feeling different about their body?

Help them understand the part of their body that needs help and relate back to positive experiences post surgery

- "After the doctors help your heart heal and feel better, you will be able to run fast without feeling tired."

What happens before surgery?

"You can't eat or drink anything before surgery because sometimes the medicine they give you that makes you sleep can make your tummy hurt if you eat or drink before."

What happens after Surgery?

"You might feel sleepy when you wake up."

- Remind them mom/dad/caregiver will be right there with them, and a nurse will be there taking care of you.

"When you wake up let me know if something on your body hurts."

Support them in understanding what will be different:

- Will there be a bandage?
- Will there be a noticeable difference to their body?
- Will their way of everyday life change after? (medicine, a tube)

Check with your medical team, but sometimes it can be helpful to share a positive experience to look forward too:

- Eat a popsicle when they wake up
- Go home after surgery
- Go to the playroom