



Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

PREPARING FOR YOUR CHILD'S OPERATION



Oxford Craniofacial Unit

The news that your child is going to have an operation can be very scary and upsetting. This booklet has been written to help prepare you for what will happen over the next few weeks and months before the operation. We have written it with help from parents who have already experienced surgical care for their children with the Oxford Craniofacial Unit.

Please remember that this booklet is a guide only and may not cover all your child's specific needs and treatment – every child is an individual. If you are unsure please check with the specialist nursing team; contact details are on the back of this booklet.

NEXT STEPS

The timing of your child's operation will depend on their diagnosis and their age. We will give you an idea of when the operation is likely to be and confirm the date in writing about six to eight weeks beforehand. The specialist nursing team will support you and your child during this process. You will be able to call them at any time if you are worried or want to talk.

COMING INTO HOSPITAL

Your child will need to come and stay in Oxford Children's Hospital for two days before their operation day to have a full assessment. This will be on:

- Tuesday and Wednesday for Thursday operations
- Thursday and Friday for Monday operations.

At this assessment they will meet the surgical team who will be operating and will have eye, hearing, development and speech and language assessments.

During your child's stay we will be able to offer you accommodation in the Ronald McDonald House on the John Radcliffe Hospital site. Your child can stay with you between tests and assessments.

In very rare cases families may have to stay in a local hotel with their child while the assessments are carried out.

On the day of their surgery, children are admitted to Theatre Direct Admissions (TDA) on Robin's Ward. They go to theatre from there, and then, after surgery, to the Paediatric High Dependency Unit (PHDU).

There are no sleeping facilities for parents on PHDU, but you can sit next to your child's cot or bed. Families are encouraged to use their room in Ronald McDonald House to get some sleep.

When they are ready, children under 12 years old move to Robin's Ward, and those over 12 move to Melanie's Ward. On these wards sleeping facilities for one parent are offered next to your child's bed.

GETTING READY

Closer to the time of the operation there will be a few practical things that you can do to get ready.

- **Clothing**

Once your child has had their operation, you will find it quite difficult to pull any tight fitting clothing over the top of their head. Babygros and button-down-the-front pyjamas are the most suitable. Most children wear very little clothing during the first few days after the operation.

- **Special toy/comforter**

A hospital is a very strange environment for your child; please bring any special toys or comforters that they may have.

If your child has a dummy please also bring this, as well as spares.

These items will give your child a greater sense of security.

- **Arrangements for the care and support of your other children**

During the early days of your child's hospital stay, you may be very anxious. Your other children may be much happier staying with relatives, but they are more than welcome to come too.

Your child's specialist nurse will be more than happy to advise you on how to prepare siblings for your child's operation using special toys and story books. Our play specialists will also give you support during the preparation process.

- **Toiletries for you and your child**

Please bring along everyday things you would normally use such as shampoo, toothpaste/brush and soap, dummies, nappies, etc. Towels are provided for your child on the ward and for you in Ronald McDonald House.

- **Food and special dietary needs**

For bottle-fed babies – please bring feeding bottles and an unopened tin of baby formula for use while they are on the ward. Sterilising facilities are available on the ward.

If you are still breastfeeding and you wish to continue feeding your baby when they are admitted to hospital, we will support you and provide a quiet area if required. After the operation the nursing staff will show you how to position your baby using a pillow to support their head. You can start feeding your baby as soon as they are awake enough to feed safely.

If your child has a special diet, either for religious reasons or medical needs, then we can provide for them. Please let their specialist nurse know before they come in for the operation.

Ronald McDonald House has a fully equipped kitchen so we suggest bringing a few ready meals and treats for yourselves while you are here.

- **Things to do**

It is worth having something with you to keep you occupied while your child is in hospital. There will be quiet periods, such as when your child is sleeping, and having a personal electronic device or a book can be a good distraction.

The hospital does have free Wi-Fi if you want to use your laptop or tablet.

COMMON FEARS AND ANXIETIES

It is very understandable to be anxious about your child's operation. The specialist nursing team and our clinical psychologists are available to support you throughout this period. Please do not hesitate to ring and speak to them – no question is too trivial.

Remember, if you are searching for information on the internet, the information may not be correct or relevant to the care that your child will receive in Oxford.

You may find that the Headlines Craniofacial Support Group is able to support you and link you up with other families with children who have undergone similar experiences.

www.headlines.org.uk

LIVING IN THE HOSPITAL

When you receive your child's operation date through the post you will need to contact the specialist nursing team to confirm that you wish to stay in Ronald McDonald House. We try very hard to make sure every family is offered a room but in rare circumstances this may not be possible. In this situation alternative accommodation will be offered and one parent can stay on the ward.

It is very important that you remember to ring the specialist nursing team to confirm your details.

We can offer a car parking permit for the duration of your child's stay. There is a weekly fee for this permit but it is much cheaper than paying the hourly rate. If you arrive by car, please park in one of the 'Pay and Display' car parks while you bring your child to the ward. Once you have the permit you can move your car to one of the staff car parks.

DAY OF THE OPERATION

While your child is in theatre, it is important to have a break and get some fresh air. When the operation is finished we will call you.

LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

Living in the hospital and supporting the care of your child can be very tiring; it is really important that you take breaks for meals and drinks. Your child needs you to be feeling positive and healthy.

GOING HOME

When the doctors feel that your child is ready to go home they will let you know. This is likely to be during the daily ward round. There are various pieces of paperwork and letters which need to be completed before you will be able to take your child home. The nurses will also go through a special discharge booklet with you so that you have an idea of what to look out for.

Your child will still need regular pain relief in the early days after discharge. It is worth buying a bottle of age appropriate paracetamol from your local chemist before they come in to hospital.

For a few weeks after their operation your child may prefer to have a soft pillow under their head when they are lying down.

Once at home if you are worried at all or have any questions please call the specialist nursing team for advice and support – that's what they are here for!

FOLLOW-UP

We will normally give you an appointment to bring your child back to clinic in three months' time for a post operation check. Occasionally they may be given an appointment sooner if there have been any concerns. If you do not receive an appointment and you are coming up to three months after your child's operation, please call the Craniofacial office on **01865 231 085**.

IF YOU HAVE ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS

Craniofacial Advanced Nurse Practitioner: 01865 231 083

Craniofacial Assistant Practitioner: 01865 231 003

Leave a message and we will get back to you as soon as possible; usually by the end of the next working day.

For any urgent advice outside of normal working hours please call Robin's Ward.

Tel: **01865 231 254/5**

If you need an interpreter or would like this information leaflet in another format, such as Easy Read, large print, Braille, audio, electronically or another language, please speak to the department where you are being seen. You will find their contact details on your appointment letter.



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