

The Children's Hospital, Oxford

# What to do in preparation for your child's admission for day surgery

Information for parents and carers



An appointment has been made for your child to have day case surgery on the Children's Day Care Ward.

Please bring your child to the ward at the time stated on their letter. It is important that you arrive on time so that the doctors can meet and assess your child before their surgery.

Please make arrangements to be at the hospital all day, in case your child is booked to have their surgery at the end of the list of operations for that day.

**If your child is unwell or has a cold, or if you wish to cancel this appointment, please let us know as soon as possible so that the theatre slot can be given to another patient.**

**Tel: 01865 234 148 or 01865 231 266**

The Children's Day Care Ward tends to be very busy. It would help us if your child is accompanied by a maximum of two adults. If you have other children, please arrange for them to be looked after for the day, including any that may be returning from school. If you have a young baby, you may bring the baby with you (please remember to bring feeds and nappies as they are not stocked on the ward. Thank you.).

## Where to find the Children's Day Care Ward

The ward is on Level 1 in the Children's Hospital at the John Radcliffe Hospital site.

If you are coming by car, please bring money for the car park.

If you use public transport to come to the hospital, please arrange a lift home. Your child cannot go home on public transport after a general anaesthetic. You will need to take them home by car. This will be more comfortable for them and also quicker for you to return to the hospital if there are any complications on the journey home.

## About the Children's Day Care Ward

When you arrive on the ward you will meet the nurse who will care for your child whilst they are in hospital. If you or your child have any questions at this point, the nurse will be able to answer them.

A nurse practitioner or doctor will check that your child is fit for the anaesthetic. An anaesthetist will give you information about the anaesthetic which will be used. The surgeon will then ask you to sign a consent form to confirm you are happy for the operation to go ahead.

There are play specialists available to help keep your child distracted with play activities, both before and after the operation. They will also help with preparing them for their anaesthetic. There are toys and gaming devices available for all ages.

A selection of drinks and sandwiches will be available for your child after their operation, but you may wish to bring their favourite food with you. You can bring a packed lunch for yourself, or there is a selection of food available to buy at various outlets in the Children's Hospital. For safety reasons, we ask that you do not bring hot drinks on to the ward.

## Starving instructions

Please make sure that you follow the starving instructions which should be included with your appointment letter. Starving (or 'fasting') is very important before an operation. If your child has anything in their stomach whilst they are under anaesthetic, it might come back up while they are unconscious and get into their lungs<sup>1</sup>.

If you haven't received the starving instructions please call the ward as soon as possible so they can send them out to you.

## What to bring with you:

- your child's favourite toy or comforter
- any special feeding equipment
- milk feeds (if needed)
- Child Health Book (their 'red book')
- any inhalers or medicines that your child needs
- comfortable loose clothing and slippers for your child.

## Preparing your child

One of our aims is to make your child's stay a happy experience. It is helpful to prepare your child beforehand so that they are not worried on the day. You may find the following books and websites useful:

- 'I don't want to go to hospital' by Tony Ross
- 'Going to the hospital' by Usborne First Experiences
- 'My first visit to hospital' by Rebecca Hunter
- 'Talking it through – Hospital' by Althea
- **[www.ouh.nhs.uk/news/videos/op-children's-hospital.aspx](http://www.ouh.nhs.uk/news/videos/op-children's-hospital.aspx)**
- **[www.childrenfirst.nhs.uk](http://www.childrenfirst.nhs.uk)**
- **[www.rcoa.ac.uk](http://www.rcoa.ac.uk)** – "Your child's general anaesthetic: information for parents and guardians of children" by The Royal College of Anaesthetists

## How is the operation carried out?

The operation is carried out under general anaesthetic. This means your child will be asleep throughout the operation. The operation is normally done as a day case. This means that you should be able to take them home later the same day. However, in some cases your child may need to stay overnight in hospital after the operation. If this happens you will be able to stay with your child.

## In the anaesthetic room

A nurse and parent/carer can go with your child to the anaesthetic room. Your child can also take a toy or comforter.

It may be possible to give the anaesthetic with your child sitting on your lap. Your child may either have anaesthetic gas to breathe or an injection through a cannula (a thin plastic tube which is placed under the skin, usually on the back of the hand). Local anaesthetic cream (EMLA or Ametop, sometimes known as 'magic cream'), can be placed on their hand or arm before any injections so they do not hurt as much. It works well for 9 out of 10 children.

If the anaesthetic is given by gas it will take a little while for your child to be anaesthetised. They may become restless as the gases take effect. If an injection is used, your child will normally become unconscious very quickly indeed. Some parents may find this frightening.

Once your child is asleep you will be asked to leave quickly so that medical staff can concentrate on looking after them. The nurse will take you back to the ward to wait for your child. Your child will then be taken into the operating theatre to have the operation or investigation. The anaesthetist will be with them at all times.

## Anaesthetic risks

In modern anaesthesia, serious problems are uncommon. Risk cannot be removed completely, but modern equipment, training and drugs have made general anaesthesia a much safer procedure in recent years. Throughout the whole of life, a person is at least 100 times more likely to suffer serious injury or death in a road traffic accident than as a result of anaesthesia.

Most children recover quickly and are soon back to normal after their operation and anaesthetic. Some children may suffer side effects like sickness or a sore throat. These usually last only a short time and there are medicines available to treat them if necessary.

The exact likelihood of complications depends on your child's medical condition and on the nature of the surgery and anaesthesia your child needs. The anaesthetist can talk to you about this in detail before the operation

## After the operation

Your named nurse will make regular checks of your child's pulse, temperature and wound. They will also make sure your child has enough pain relief until they are discharged home. Please see our separate pain relief leaflet "Pain relief after your child's day case surgery" for more information about how pain is treated.

Your child's named nurse will use a pain assessment tool to help assess your child's pain score after their operation. This is a chart which helps us to gauge how much pain your child may be feeling. You and your child will be introduced to this assessment tool either at their pre-assessment visit or on the ward before their operation.

Once your child is awake from the anaesthetic they can start drinking and, if they are not sick, they can start eating their normal diet.

The minimum recovery time before discharge is one to two hours.

## Once you get home

Occasionally, the anaesthetic may leave your child feeling sick for the first 24 hours. The best treatment for this is rest and small, frequent amounts of fluid, toast or biscuits. If they are sick and this continues for longer than 24 hours, please contact your GP.

The hospital experience is strange and unsettling for some children so do not be concerned if your child is more clingy, easily upset or has disturbed sleep. Just be patient and understanding

**Your child will need regular painkillers following the operation so please make sure you have enough children's paracetamol and ibuprofen at home.**

Any specific instructions for care after the operation will be given to you on the day of the operation.

### **Contact details:**

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us:

Children's Day Care Ward: Tel: **01865 234 148/9**  
**(7.30am to 7.30pm,**  
**Monday to Friday)**

Robin's Ward: Tel: **01865 231 254/5**  
**(24 hours)**

Children's Hospital  
switchboard: Tel: **01865 741 166**

**We hope that this information is useful to you and welcome any comments about the care or information you have received.**

## References

<sup>1</sup>Royal College of Anaesthetists (2003) Your child's general anaesthetic; information for parents and guardians of children London: RCOA  
**[www.rcoa.ac.uk](http://www.rcoa.ac.uk)**

If you have a specific requirement, need an interpreter, a document in Easy Read, another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221 473** or email **[PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk](mailto:PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk)**

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