

---

# Preparing for Your Child's Heart Surgery

Developed by the health care professionals of Cardiology  
with assistance from the Department of Learning and  
Development.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in  
any form or by any means now known to be invented, electronic or mechani-  
cal, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage or retrieval  
system without written permission from the authors or publisher, except for brief  
inclusion of quotations in a review.

PE#036 © 2006 BC Children's Hospital

---



An agency of the Provincial  
Health Services Authority

4480 Oak Street, Vancouver BC, V6H 3V4

604-875-2345, 1-888-300-3088

website: [www.bcchildrens.ca](http://www.bcchildrens.ca)

---

**1** **Setting  
the  
date:**

Your child, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

has been booked for heart surgery with:  
Dr. \_\_\_\_\_ on  
\_\_\_\_\_.

Your child's Pre-Admission Clinic  
appointment is on:  
\_\_\_\_\_ at  
\_\_\_\_\_.

is now on the wait list, and we will  
contact you when we have a date.

*Planning ahead for  
surgery can help  
reduce some of  
the stress. Read  
through this booklet  
and write down  
questions as they  
come up. Bring this  
booklet with you to  
the hospital for your  
visits leading up to  
your child's surgery.*

## 2 Your Healthy Child

Your child's surgery can only be done if you child is healthy. Here are some things to help prepare for your child's surgery to make sure that he/she is as healthy as possible.

- **Make sure your child's mouth, gums, and teeth are healthy**
  - o Visit the dentist if your child has teeth.
  - o Have all dental work done at least 1 month before the surgery.
  - o Call the Cardiology Clinic Nurse at (604) 875-2345 ext. 7111 to ask whether your child needs antibiotics for dental work if you are unsure.
  
- **Let us know if your child becomes ill**
  - Please notify the Cardiac Surgeon's secretaries, Charlotte Robertson or Joan Wilkinson at (604) 875-3165 if your child has:

### Note:

*Some kinds of heart defects put children at risk for heart infection. Teeth and gums are an easy way for bacteria to enter the blood.*

## 3 Your Child's Medications

**Give your child all his medicines until the day of surgery except:**

- Stop giving Aspirin™ 7 days before surgery, unless your doctor gives you a different time.
  
- Stop giving Coumadin a few days before surgery. Call Charlotte or Joan at (604) 875-3165 ext. #7111 to find out when to stop this.
  
- Do not give Enoxaparin injections the night before or the morning of surgery.

# 4 The Pre-Admission Clinic

Plan to be at the pre-admission clinic for 4-6 hours.

## Reminder – Please bring:

- *Immunization records*
- *List of medications your child takes*
- *BC Health Care Card*
- Please try to find someone to care for your other children at home. Children soon get bored and cranky. It is hard for you to care for them as well as be part of the clinic.
- You may find it helpful to bring a support person along. You will get a lot of information. It is good to be able to discuss what you heard later.
- We suggest that you bring toys, books, and a bag lunch or snacks for you and your child.

## At the Pre-Admission clinic you can expect to:

- Tour the areas of the hospital where you can wait while your child is in surgery and the wards your child will be staying on.
- Talk with surgeon to discuss and understand the plan for surgery.
- Provide information about your child's health problems, immunization records, allergies, medications etc. Don't forget to bring your child's immunization record, medication information and his/her BC Health Card
- Have a chance to ask questions and talk about concerns. Sometimes it is

hard to remember all of the questions that you think of, so you and your child should write your questions down before you come to the clinic.

## Your child can expect to:

- Have a physical examination.
- Have some tests such as a blood test, a chest X-ray, an electrocardiogram (EKG or ECG) and/or an echocardiogram (ECHO) if required.

## You will be given information about:

- When to arrive at the hospital on the day of surgery.
- Fasting so that your child has an empty stomach and bowels before surgery. This is very important and the surgery can be delayed if these instructions are not followed carefully.
- Sedatives to calm your child before the surgery and anesthetic for the surgery.
- Recovery, particularly about getting moving right away, and breathing exercises to keep your child's lungs clear.
- Informed consent for blood transfusion and heart surgery. You will be asked to sign the consent forms here. If you would like more information on informed consent, please see the pamphlet called "Consent for Health Care" in this package.

## Tip:

*Make a list of the questions you want to ask or the information you want to give about your child.*

## 5 Preparing Your Child

### Tip

*Make arrangements for the care of your other children while your child is in hospital. This way you can give your full attention to your child as he recovers. Long days in the hospital are boring for other children. Short visits are less stressful for all.*

You are the most important person on your child's team. The rest of us will bring our expertise to taking care of her needs, but no-one will be able to give the comfort, support and encouragement like you can. Parents are not "visitors," so you can be with your child 24 hours if you choose. While your child is in Intensive Care Unit or in the Transitional Care Unit, you may need accommodation nearby as there is no bed beside your child. Once your child is in a regular ward, you can have a cot beside the bed. We encourage you to take regular breaks. Eating well, taking walks and being in the fresh air will keep your spirits and energy up.

- Start preparing your child for the experience before you arrive at the hospital. Use your child's age as a guide to when to start talking. The number of years is about the right number of days ahead i.e. 5 years = 5 days ahead; 10 years = 10 days ahead
- Talk about what will happen during the stay in the hospital to fix the heart. Discuss what your child will see, hear and feel; what people will be there; what he might be asked to do, e.g.: "take a deep breath" or "hold out your hand to have cream rubbed into it." Help your child to understand that things will be very different in the hospital. For example: different food, different beds, different people, and different places to play. It is hard for children under five years old to

### A note about what to expect when your child is in hospital:

*Routines of the hospital are not what your child is used to. Some children find it hard to adapt. They may show this by acting out and/or, not being able to fall asleep or stay calm. It's normal for children to feel grumpy or bad-tempered for a few days. Staff understand this. We suggest you try to maintain some limits on behaviour but make allowances for the situation.*

understand "surgery". We suggest you don't focus too much on this. Give your child a chance to tell you what she thinks will happen and take it from there. If you want books or a video to help with preparation call The Family Resource Library at 604-875-2345 local 5102.

- The Child Life Specialist will explain with the best words, and use play, to give your child ways of coping with any anxiety around the surgery. If you want more advice you can call the child life specialist at 604-875-2345 ext. 7686 or the Nurse Clinician at the Children's Heart Centre at 604-875-2345 ext. 7111.
- Be honest with your child about what will happen. We sometimes hide the truth in order to protect our child from fear. Your child may be upset and angry, but the truth builds trust in what you say. Stay calm and matter-of fact about the event. Your child will pick up from you that this is something he can manage.
- Tell your child your own plans for staying with him at the hospital.
- Tell your child that you are there to help when she feels sad or mad. Things will get back to normal in a few weeks.

## 6 What to Pack

- The hospital has pajamas, bedding, diapers and food for your child. (Some children like to wear their own pajamas and casual clothes - this is fine.)
- Please bring toothbrush, hairbrush, toothpaste, slippers and a robe.
- If your child has favourite items, like a toy, movies, tapes/CDs, or a blanket, please bring these.
- For babies, their own soothers, sleepers or T-shirts, cups, bottles, spoons make things more comfortable.
- Hospital bed linens are available for parents, but we encourage you to bring your own blanket and a pillow.
- Please mark all items with your child's name.
- Phone card if you are from out of town

*You must switch off cellular telephones inside the hospital. They interfere with medical equipment and monitors.*

## 7 Visiting

- The ICU only allows 2-3 visitors at a time at the bedside.
- Many children in hospital have a weak immune system that cannot fight infections. Please be sure that visitors with coughs and colds, or those that have been with someone who has measles, chicken pox and other childhood diseases, do not visit. One "not very sick" visitor can make many children **very** sick!
- You are responsible for children who visit the hospital.

## 8 Surgery May be Postponed

There are the things that happen in a hospital that make it necessary to change the date of surgery.

### They can include:

- Emergency surgeries taking away the use of the operating time
- The Intensive Care Unit not having an available recovery bed

*We will notify you as soon as possible if your child's surgery must be postponed. We understand how upsetting this is. The safety of your child is our main concern. Surgery will not take place if we cannot provide the proper care before and after.*

## Other Resources

**This package includes some other information that can help you:**

- Children's Heart Network" newsletter
  - o an introduction to the parents support group
- "Blood Transfusion" pamphlet with:
  - o answers to some common questions
  - o information about donating your blood for your child, please contact the Cardiac Surgeon's secretaries, Charlotte or Joan at (604) 875-3165 for an application.
- "Consent for Health Care" pamphlet to help you answer questions about informed consent.



**At Children's & Women's Health Centre of British Columbia we believe parents are partners on the health care team. We want you to be as informed as possible. This brochure will answer some of your questions. Please ask about things you do not understand and share your concerns. If you have any concerns, please feel free to ask anytime.**