Tips to Help Your Child Cope with Surgery

A toddler's (1 years – 2 years) main concern is separation from parents. Toddlers do best when they are prepared 1 to 2 days before their surgery, as they do not have a good concept of time. Although they may not understand why they need surgery, it will help if they are told about it using simple language and pictures.

Toddlers may find the following stressful:

- Separation from parents
- Change to their routine
- Unfamiliar people
- Medical equipment and procedures

Preparing your toddler for surgery:

- One Explain the surgery in words your toddler will understand, such as "your tummy has been sore/upset/ouchy, the doctor is going to fix your owie tummy."
- Separation from parents can be stressful. Make plans for at least one familiar caregiver to be present as much as possible during your hospital stay.
- Try to maintain normal routines as much as possible.
- Bring items from home such as favorite toy or blanket for comfort to help create more familiar surroundings.
- Bring your child some toys from home; Play is the best way to help them cope during their hospital stay.
- Toddlers may shy away from unfamiliar people. Just before and during any procedure, explain what will happen. Ask the staff to show what will be done using your child's stuffed animal. Encourage your child to "practice" through play with doll or on a parent.
- Feelings of fear, anger, and sadness are common for children. Encourage expression of these feelings through play.
- Be patient with your child. It is normal for them to be fussy, clingy and cry more during times of stress.
- Children feel safer with boundaries placed on their behaviours.
- Offer choices whenever possible to give your child a sense of control. For example, "Do you want to take your medicine with apple juice or water?" or "What stuffed animal should we bring?"
- Although we do our best to run on schedule, please plan for long waits.
- Please do not hesitate to ask questions or explain to staff what helps your child.