



A Calm Companion

Created for SickKids' patients and their families to read together,
using child-friendly language.

SickKids[®]

Welcome to A Calm Companion!

This guide was made just for you—with help from other kids, families and the team at SickKids.

You might feel ready for your surgery, or maybe you feel a little nervous or unsure.

Going to the hospital can bring up all kinds of feelings—like being curious, excited, worried, or even a little scared. That's okay! Everyone feels different and your feelings might change from day to day. This guide is here to help you feel more ready and supported.

You might recognize some of these feelings in the emojis below, circle how you feel.

-  Nervous — “I’ve got butterflies!”
-  Scared — “This is kinda scary...”
-  Anxious — “My tummy feels funny”
-  Excited — “Can’t wait! So cool!”
-  Hopeful — “I really hope it goes well!”
-  Confused — “Huh? What’s happening?”
-  Bored — “This is taking forever...”
-  Brave — “I can do this! I’m super brave!”
-  Sad — “I feel a little blue”
-  Relieved — “Whew! That’s better now”
-  Angry — “I’m mad and I don’t like this”
-  Lonely — “I miss my family”
-  Curious — “What’s this button do?”
-  Tired — “I just wanna nap”
-  Calm — “I feel nice and quiet now”

Inside, you’ll find:

- Tips to help you feel calm and brave
- Fun activities to try
- Space to draw or write your thoughts

You can choose the parts that work best for you!

If you or your family want more help, there are special SickKids teams who are here for you. You can find them on page 10.

Your comfort and care are super important to us.

Guess what? Your caregivers are here to help too.

They have their own guide with tips just for them – **beginning on page 11.**



MIND-BODY TIPS

Here are some ideas to help you feel calm and ready for your surgery.

Check off the ones you like!

Kid's Guided Meditation

Listen to one or all of the SKOOP channel's Children's Guided Relaxation



Positive Self-Talk

Say things like:

- "I've got this"
- "I'm strong and supported"
- "I can handle what's ahead"

It might feel weird at first, your brain listens to what you tell it.

Watch the SKOOP Channel

Learning about our Feelings



Calm Zone

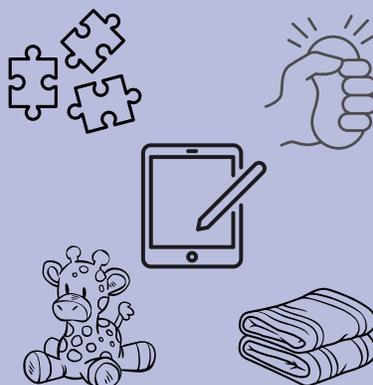


Listen to Music

Check out and listen to SickKids' Music Therapy's Playlists on YouTube



Bring a Comfort Item



Be Together

Sit with someone. You can read a book, play a game, or just hold hands.



Make a Calm Playlist

Pick songs that make you feel happy or sleepy. You can listen with headphones or sing along!

Listen on your own device; don't forget your headphones!



Draw or Doodle

Use crayons or markers to draw how you feel. You can draw your favorite place, a superhero or even your feelings as colours.



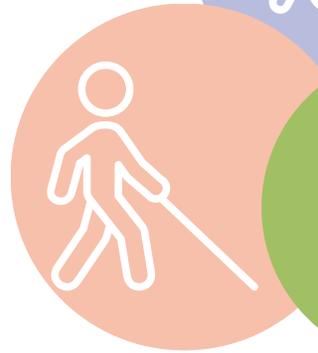
Wear Comfy Clothes

It's a great idea to wear clothes that are super comfy! Try to pick things that are easy to put on and take off, soft and cozy.



 **MOVEMENT**

Moving your body helps release special chemicals in your brain that may help you relax. Stay active before surgery day to help you feel happier and more calm.





MEDICATION

On surgery day, in the Pre-Op area, medication may help you feel more relaxed before entering the operating room.



SickKids' Comfort Promise

You will be offered ways to prevent and minimize needle-poke pain.



In Pre-Op, your nurse and anesthesiologist (sleep doctor) will discuss calming medication options and together you will decide whether to take them.



If you receive calming medication, it is important to stay on your stretcher, bed, chair, or stroller.



Calming medications can be given by mouth, nose spray, into a vein or a muscle (arm or leg) by a healthcare professional shortly before surgery.

Benefits

- Helps you feel less scared before surgery.
- You may feel calmer when leaving your caregivers.
- Helps you stay relaxed and follow instructions.
- Some medicines help you forget the stressful parts of surgery.
- Helps you stay still and comfortable when getting anesthesia.
- Some medicines may decrease your pain.

Side Effects

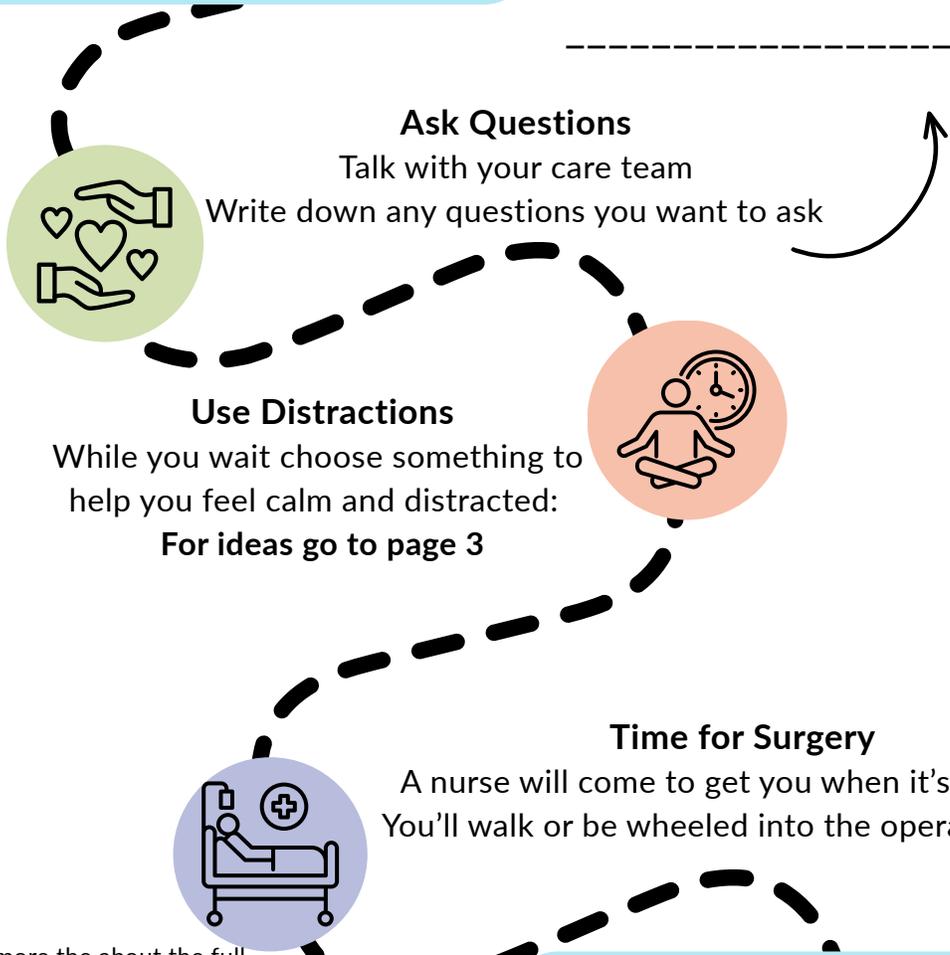
- You may feel sleepy or unsteady.
- Some medicines can upset your stomach.
- You may become fussy instead of calm.
- You may have trouble remembering things for a short time.
- Your vision may become blurry for a little while.

FINDING CALM ON YOUR DAY OF SURGERY

Arrive 2 Hours Early

This gives you and your care team time to get ready without feeling rushed. Don't forget to bring any comfort items that help you feel relaxed and calm—we want you to feel as comfortable as possible.

Questions for your healthcare team



Ask Questions
Talk with your care team
Write down any questions you want to ask



Use Distractions
While you wait choose something to help you feel calm and distracted:
For ideas go to page 3



Time for Surgery
A nurse will come to get you when it's your turn
You'll walk or be wheeled into the operating room

To learn more the about the full coming for surgery journey, visit [The SickKids' Coming for Surgery Website](#)



Recovery After Surgery

After your surgery, you'll rest for a little while before you wake up and see your family. A nurse will talk to you and your caregiver about what happens next—whether you're going home or staying at the hospital.



I AM CALM AND CONFIDENT



Affirmations to help me feel brave

I am brave, even when things feel new or scary

I can do hard things

I take deep breaths to help me feel calm

I am loved

I can ask for help when I need it

I am strong

I focus on what makes me feel good

I can think positive thoughts

My voice matters

I am surrounded by loving people

I love myself

I choose to feel brave

I am safe

I can handle new challenges

When I think about my surgery...

I can distract myself by:

I can talk to:

I can listen to:

I can use these
distraction items:

I can draw how I feel:

I can move my body by:

What am I looking forward to...



SICKKIDS RESOURCES

Below are resources to help you learn about the services available at SickKids. Visit the Resources section on the [Preparing for Surgery](#) page:



Read the [Coming for Surgery Workbook](#)

Essential information to help you prepare for surgery at SickKids.



Visit the [Coming for Surgery Learning Hub](#)

General information on how to prepare for surgery.



Contact the [Spiritual and Religious Care Team](#)

Provides counsel, prayer and support to help you find peace.



Contact the [Mindfulness Project](#)

Offers mindfulness sessions to help build resilience and reduce stress.



Contact [Resource Navigation Service](#)

Available to assist families in finding resources e.g. financial, legal, etc.



Look Up [Family Spaces and Family Programs](#)



Ask to speak with a **Child Life Specialist**

Supports your social and emotional impact of illness through therapeutic play, preparation and education to reduce fear, anxiety and pain.

Ask your healthcare team for a referral.

Ask to speak with a **Indigenous Health Navigator**

Provides traditional healing practices, including smudging, for Indigenous families.

Ask your healthcare team for a referral.

Ask to speak with a **Social Worker**

Provides emotional and psychological support for you and your family.

Ask your healthcare team for a referral.



A Caregiver's Calm Companion

SickKids®

**You might recognize some of these feelings in the emojis below,
circle how you feel.**

- 😟 Worried – “I just want everything to go okay.”
- 😨 Scared – “This is terrifying – they’re my whole world.”
- 👉 Hopeful – “I trust the doctors. I believe in the care they’ll get.”
- 😬 Anxious – “Waiting is the hardest part.”
- 😓 Overwhelmed – “So many questions, so much info.”
- 😞 Sad – “I wish I could take their place.”
- 💪 Strong – “I have to be brave – for them.”
- 🙏 Grateful – “Thankful for the team helping us through this.”
- 😡 Angry – “Why does my child have to go through this?”
- 😔 Lonely – “It feels like no one else gets it.”
- 😌 Calm – “I’m focusing on the positives.”
- 😕 Confused – “I don’t always understand the medical stuff.”
- ❤️ Loved – “Family and friends are lifting us up.”
- 😌 Relieved – “We’ve made it through this step.”

Your well-being matters.
Taking care of yourself helps you care for your child.

Write or draw something you want to share with your child after surgery:

TAKE PART IN YOUR CHILD'S CARE

You know your child best. Your insights, instincts and advocacy are essential. We see you as a partner in care and we want to work with you every step of the way. Here's how you can take an active role in your child's care:

Ask Questions

You deserve to feel informed. Ask about your child's procedure, medications, symptoms and recovery. The more you know, the more confident and prepared you'll feel. There are no "silly" questions—your voice matters.

Talk to Us

Your team at SickKids is here for you. We want to hear what's on your mind—your questions, your ideas, your concerns. We'll work with you to make a plan that fits you best.

Share With Us What Matters to Your Family

Your values, beliefs and identity are important. Let us know what's meaningful to you—whether it's cultural practices, spiritual support, or family traditions.

We'll do our best to honour and support them.

Interpreter services are available, please speak to your healthcare team to arrange.



Patient and Family Rights & Responsibilities

Defines the rights of patients and families when receiving care at SickKids, and their responsibilities towards staff and other patients and families.



Being Informed is The Best Way to Prepare

Visit the [Coming for Surgery Website](#)





MIND-BODY TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS

Here are some ideas to help you feel calm and ready for your child's surgery. **Check off the ones you like!**

Grounding Exercises

Try the 5-4-3-2-1 technique

Name:

5 things you can see,
4 things you can touch,
3 things you can hear,
2 things you can smell, and
1 thing you can taste.

Supportive Self-Talk

Speak to yourself with the same kindness you'd offer your child.

Say things like:

- "I'm doing my best"
- "It's okay to feel this way"
- "I am brave"

Digital Downtime

Take a break from screens. Step outside for fresh air or find a peaceful space in the hospital to close your eyes for a few minutes to rest your mind.

Let Go of "Perfect"

There's no perfect way to be a caregiver.
Reminder: You're doing your best—and that's more than enough.

Watch a Video

Two Wings to Fly - Mindfulness and Compassion

Watch this 4 minute video with your child or on your own.



Connect

A short conversation with a friend, partner or another caregiver can help you feel less alone. Let friends and family members know how they can support you. You don't have to do this alone.

Create a Calm Playlist

Music can change your mood fast.
Make a playlist of songs that help you feel relaxed, focused or distracted in a good way. Listen on your own device; don't forget your headphones!

Journal or Doodle

Writing or sketching your thoughts can help release tension and bring clarity.

Gratitude Pause

Think of one thing, big or small, that you're grateful for today. One moment of gratitude can help shift your focus and decrease anxiety, worry or stress.



WELLNESS TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS

Staying active and caring for your own wellness before and on your child's surgery day can help release natural calming chemicals in your brain and support you in feeling more relaxed.

Move Your Body:

Engage in activities that feel good for you. Movement helps release stress and boosts your mood.

Fuel Your Body:

Don't skip meals. Eating nourishing foods gives your body the energy it needs to heal, think clearly and feel strong.

Prioritize Sleep:

Sleep is your body's reset button. Try to get enough rest each night so you can feel your best during the day.

Stay Hydrated:

Drink plenty of water throughout the day. It helps your body function better and can even improve your mood and focus.

Meditation, Yoga or Quiet Time:

Powerful self-care tools for parents and caregivers to stay grounded, present, and emotionally available during your child's surgical journey