

Information for parents and families of a child having surgery at Darwin Private Hospital



Coming to hospital can be daunting for children and their families, particularly if they don't know what is involved. We have written answers to some common questions/concerns that people may have:

Always feel free to ask any questions you may have - no matter how trivial they may seem!

Please bring a favourite toy/blanket &/or dummy (if your child uses one).

There will be periods of waiting so we suggest you bring a book, ipad, game or other distraction.

Please remember that they will take their cues from you, so try to act relaxed even if you are not!

If your child has had an unsettled night prior to surgery, can you please inform us of any concerns you have. This will ensure all staff are aware and can take this into consideration when caring for your child.

Children will wear their own clothes into surgery. If possible, tops with short sleeves and openings at the front are the best. All-in-one suits are really hard to get children out of - please avoid these.

If they really want to wear their princess dress or batman costume, that is ok.

Please bring clean nappies for your child (if appropriate) or shorts and underwear as accidents sometimes happen.

When you meet the surgeon, anaesthetic doctor and nurses they will be wearing "scrubs" (which look like dark-blue pyjamas) and a cap to cover their hair.

Theatre can be a busy and noisy place but where possible we will try and find a quiet place for you. There are lots of people who will want to talk to you and your child on the day of surgery, and they will all ask the same questions - this is part of our normal process.

The reason we don't let your child eat or drink before surgery is part of making sure they are safe.

When people are under anaesthetic, their normal reflexes don't always work, and there is a chance that anything in their stomach may come up their throat and be breathed into their lungs (the technical term for this is "aspiration"). This can cause pneumonia and other complications.

To minimize the risk of this, we try and make sure that there is nothing in your child's stomach at the time of surgery, so please follow the instructions from the anaesthetic doctor about eating and drinking before surgery.



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Please do not eat or drink in the waiting area in front of children who cannot.

Most of the time your child will be able to eat and drink very soon after surgery. Please bring a bottle of milk or formula to drink after surgery (where appropriate), or a special cup if your child has one.

Not all anaesthetic doctors like parents to come into the operating theatre with their child, and not all parents will want to go into the theatre either!

If you go into the operating theatre with your child you will need to wear a hospital gown over your clothes, a hat and covers over your feet. Children usually think this is really funny and it is a great photo opportunity!

Sometimes as your child goes off to sleep, they will wriggle around - this is common, and we will be ready to hold them so they do not injure themselves.

Once your child is asleep, all our attention is on keeping them safe, and one of our staff will escort you back to the waiting area.

Even though their surgery might be short, your child may sleep for some time afterwards. If we don't call for you, it is not because we have forgotten about you - your child is most likely still asleep.

Sometimes you might hear your child crying after waking up. We will not call you until we are sure that they are safe and comfortable, so there may be a delay while we care for your child before we call for you (we might be giving them pain medication or nausea medicine) however we will re-unite you as soon as possible. Please do not enter recovery without an invitation - this is for your child's safety.

Whilst in recovery, please respect the privacy of other patients.

Finally, we appreciate the trust you place in us when you let us care for your child. We realise that you may be very nervous about this process also.

If you think there is anything else we should include here for other parents and families, please let us know.

