

Recovering at Home

Each child recovers from a surgery or procedure at a different pace. Your care team will give you a discharge plan that tells you how to care for your child at home after the surgery or procedure. This document tells you some of the things your care team may talk about in this discharge plan.

What do I need to know about giving my child medicines?

Your doctor will talk with you about restarting any medicines your child was already taking and starting any new medicines.

If the doctor gave your child a prescription medicine for pain, give it as prescribed. If your child is not taking prescription pain medicine, ask your doctor if your child can take over-the-counter pain medicine.

How can I take care of my child's incision?

If your child has a cut, also called an incision, from the surgery or procedure, follow your doctor's instructions to care for it. If you did not get instructions, follow this general advice:

If your child has a bandage over their incision

Your child may have a bandage over their incision. A bandage can protect the incision and help it heal.

- **Your child's doctor will tell you how often to change the bandage.** They will usually tell you to change the bandage every day or more often if needed.
- **When your doctor says, it is safe to get the area with the bandage wet, gently wash it with warm water every day.** Pat the incision dry.
- **If your child has strips of tape on their incision, do not remove them.** The strips of tape will fall off on their own.
- **If your child has stitches or staples on their incision, do not remove them.** The doctor will tell you when to come back to have them removed.
- **If there is skin adhesive, also called liquid stitches, on the incision, leave it on until it falls off.**

Showering

Your child may shower **24 to 48 hours** after their surgery or procedure. **But don't let your child swim or take a bath until the doctor tells you it is safe.**

When can my child return to their normal activities?

Your child can return to their normal activities if their doctor says it is safe to do so. If the doctor says it is safe, help your child get up and move around several times a day.

How soon your child can return to normal activities depends on your child's type of surgery or procedure. The doctor will tell you when your child can do sports or exercise. The doctor will also tell you when your child can go back to school or daycare.

Watch your child closely during activities. Please have your child rest until the doctor says it is safe to move more. Sometimes, children recovering from a surgery or procedure feel better quickly and are too active before it is safe, which can lead to injury. Your child should rest or do calm activities like reading, coloring, or watching movies.

What should my child eat after their surgery or procedure?

Follow the doctor's instructions about what your child can eat or drink. The doctor may suggest that you give your child only clear liquids for the first several hours until their nausea has gone away.

Unless the doctor gives you special instructions, your child may slowly go back to their normal diet. You can start by giving your child small amounts of their usual foods. It may be good to start with bland foods, like plain pasta, toast, rice, and applesauce, to see how their stomach handles their normal diet.

For a baby, the doctor will tell you if you need to change anything about your breastfeeding or bottle-feeding while they recover.

Signs of infection

If your child has signs of infection, call your child's surgeon.

Signs of infection include:

- Increased pain, swelling, warmth, or redness around the incision.
- Red streaks leading from the incision.
- Pus is coming out of the incision.
- A fever of **over 100°F or 38°C**.

How do I know if my child is in pain?

Contact us

Call the surgeon if your child has pain that doesn't get better after taking pain medicine.

If your child cannot speak, it can be hard to know if they are in pain or how to comfort them.

Some common ways to tell that a child is in pain include:

- **Changes in usual behavior.** Your child may eat less or be fussy or restless.
- **Crying that does not stop** when comforted.
- **Grunting or holding their breath.**
- **Facial expressions.** Your child may wrinkle their forehead, close their eyes, or look angry
- **Sleep changes,** such as waking often or sleeping more or less than usual.
- **Body movements.** Your child may make fists, kick, protect a part of the body while walking, cling to someone who holds them, or not move.

Follow-up care

Follow-up care is a key part of your child's treatment and safety. Make sure to go to all your child's appointments and call the surgeon if your child is having problems. We recommend knowing your child's test results and bringing a list of the medicines your child takes to their appointments.