

What to Expect After Surgery

When will I be reunited with my child?

Your child will be observed for a period of time in the recovery area. The medical staff will reunite you with your child as soon as possible in the recovery area. The nursing staff will monitor your child's vital signs, pain control, and responsiveness (waking up). The length of stay in the recovery area varies; however, you should expect your child to stay at least 30 minutes to 1 hour. You can remain with your child through the recovery process and until it's time to go home.

What can I expect after surgery?

Children respond differently to anesthesia. Some children wake up quickly and may be awake before their families arrive at the bedside. Other children may still be sleeping from the effects of anesthesia. Please do not wake your child; children often have a gentler and more comfortable wake up when they awaken on their own.

Some children may have an upset stomach. Some children may have dizziness, or a sore throat due to the use of a breathing tube during surgery. Some children wake up shivering though they are not cold. Encouraging your child to take deep breaths will help. Those who have had intravenous (IV) pain medication may have an extremely itchy nose. This itch will go away. All of these reactions are normal.

Some children wake up restless or irritable, in a condition known as "emergence delirium." Children experiencing emergence delirium may cry, thrash, arch their back, reach out, and seem inconsolable, even when they are in their parent's arms. This behavior is not usually related to pain, and children do not usually remember it.

Emergence delirium may be upsetting for you to see, but be assured that it will go away. By staying calm, speaking softly, and remaining at the bedside, you can be a comfort to your child. Your nurse will be at the bedside to reassure and support you in consoling and comforting your child.

At home: As a result of the surgery and the anesthetic, you may see changes in your child's sleep and behavioral patterns.

Will my child be in pain?

Pediatric Specialists of Virginia is dedicated to keeping your child comfortable after surgery with the least number of side effects possible. Your child may experience some discomfort or even pain following a procedure. Managing your child's pain is very important to us and we try to control pain before your child comes out of the surgical suite. Sometimes it is necessary to give additional pain medicine.

Parents and caregivers can help by telling your child's care team what has worked to help soothe your child's pain in the past, and by supporting your child by holding his/her hand, rocking, cradling, cuddling, or offering a favorite security object (blanket, stuffed animal, or pacifier) that you have brought.

Please address any other questions or concerns you have with your child's nurse, anesthesiologist, or physician.