

Questions to Ask Before Your Child Has Surgery

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It is very common for the students in our school to require surgery. If you anticipate your child will be having surgery, please relay that information to the clinic. Here is a list of questions for you, as a parent, to ask your doctor, as well as your equipment provider, before your child has the procedure performed. Also included is information the school will need before your child returns to school.

A. Questions to ask your doctor

1. If your child is able to walk prior to surgery will there be weight-bearing restrictions following surgery on either or both legs – or arms?
2. How will your child transfer following surgery? Will your child be able to put weight through both legs to stand and transfer? Will he/she need to be transferred using a sling and lift to decrease strain on an incision? Will he/she need to be kept on a wedge when lying on their back following surgery instead of flat on their back? Will your child need to be rolled as a whole unit (log rolling) versus the upper body rolling, followed by the lower body?
3. Will your child be on new medications and how will these medications affect your child while at school? Dosages and administration of medications will need to be discussed with the school nurse.
4. Will your child need to build up his endurance following surgery to tolerate a full day at school? Will they need to start at ½ day and build up to a full day, or need to be placed on a mat during the day to get a break from being in their wheelchair?
5. Will your child need to wear a cast or a special brace following surgery? Staff may need to be trained on how to manage the cast, or on how to take the brace or cast on and off. Also, ask the Dr. if there is a schedule for when the brace or cast needs to be worn. What should you look for if the brace or cast isn't fitting well?
6. How will your child use the bathroom or bathe following the procedure? Will they need to use a gurney vs. an upright toilet temporarily? Will a lift and sling need to be used for toileting initially? Will log rolling need to be performed with managing his/her clothing when being changed? Will your child need to have an assistive device? (i.e. walker, crutches, cane, etc.) Make sure the assistive device is ordered and sized (done through your equipment representative) prior to your child returning to school.
7. *Have your physician supply a PHYSICIAN'S ORDER prior to/or upon your child's return to school.

B. Questions to ask your equipment provider

1. Will a loaner wheelchair be needed after the surgery? Often times, a child who is able to walk will have surgery and be unable to walk initially and will need a loaner wheelchair until they are fully able to put weight through their legs. Look into this BEFORE the surgery is performed, as there is often a lag time between when the loaner wheelchair is ordered and when it is received.
2. Will the loaner wheelchair need to have elevating leg rests to help with managing the swelling or to keep the legs out straight due to casting?
3. Make sure the loaner wheelchair comes with an appropriate seat belt, chest strap, and headrest for the child.
4. Will your child's own wheelchair need to be modified following surgery?

C. Questions to ask Jefferson County Transportation prior to returning to school in a

new wheelchair

1. Talk with transportation, and have them approve the wheelchair for transport BEFORE the first day the student returns to school. Often times the busses are unable to take your child in a wheelchair with the leg rests elevated or that needs to be reclined. Transportation will make sure there are appropriate tie downs for safety and that there is room on your student's bus for an additional wheelchair.
2. If the bus is unable to transport your child, will the wheelchair fit in your own vehicle?

Please Note: Following your child's surgery, we would love a call to the clinic to hear how your child is doing. We do think about those in surgery during the day. =)

D. *In order for your child to return to school, we will require a PHYSICIAN'S ORDER to release your student to return to school. This order should address the following for the school setting

1. Restrictions for your child here at school.
2. Specific positioning required while at school

E. Please discuss the following with the school nurse

1. Physician's orders, restrictions.
2. Status of your child's tolerance and fatigue level.
3. Location of incisions, status and care of incision.
4. Pain Management.
5. Bathrooming needs at school.
6. If you were given discharge orders or paperwork and want to share this information with the clinic and P.T., we would be happy to make a copy. Please contact your child's nurse or physical therapist if you have specific questions, or would like additional information.