



# A Calm Companion

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


**SickKids**<sup>®</sup>

## Welcome to A Calm Companion!

This guide was made just for you—with help from 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

**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.

If you have questions or feedback about *A Calm Companion*, please reach out to:  
[calm.companion@sickkids.ca](mailto:calm.companion@sickkids.ca)



## 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



Listen to Music

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



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!



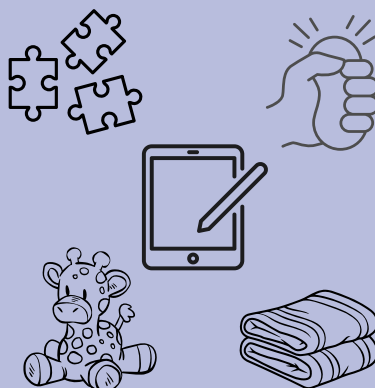
Positive Self-Talk

Say things like:

- "I've got this"
- "I'm strong"
- "I'm supported"

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

Bring a Comfort Item



Draw or Doodle

Use crayons or markers to write or draw how you feel.



Watch the SKOOP Channel

Learning about our Feelings



Calm Zone

Be Together

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



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.

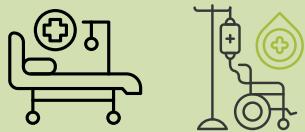


### SickKids' Comfort Promise

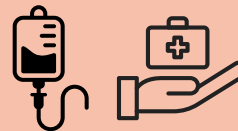
You will be offered ways to prevent and minimize needle-poke pain.



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 parts of the surgical journey
- Helps you stay still and comfortable
- 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 healthcare team time to get ready without feeling rushed. Don't forget to bring any comfort items that help you feel relaxed and calm.

## Questions for your healthcare team

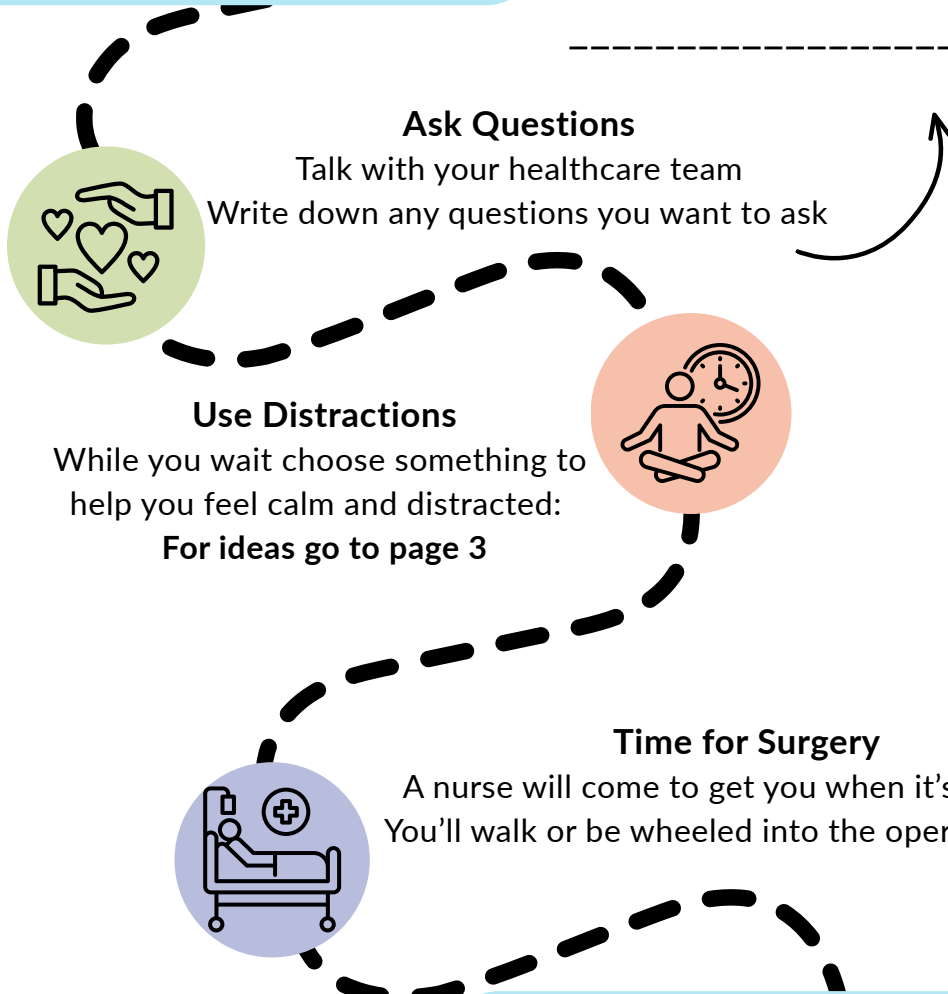
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## Ask Questions

Talk with your healthcare 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



## 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.

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



## I AM CALM AND CONFIDENT



I am brave, even when things feel new or scary

I can do hard things

I can handle new challenges

I am loved

I can ask for help when I need it

I focus on what makes me feel good

I am strong

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 take deep breaths to help me feel calm

## 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...

This page is for you to fill out.  
This is optional, but may help you get ready for your surgery.



# SICKKIDS RESOURCES

Below are resources to help you learn about the services available at SickKids.  
You can also 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](#)

A variety of spaces, each designed to create an atmosphere that is welcoming, healing, safe, and fun!

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

Supports 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<sup>®</sup>**

## Welcome to A Caregivers' Calm Companion!

This guide was made just for you—with help from other caregivers and the team at SickKids. Your well-being matters. Taking care of yourself helps you care for your child.

You might feel ready for your child's surgery, or maybe you feel a little nervous or unsure. Everyone feels different and your feelings might change from day to day.

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.”

Journal 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 healthcare 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"
- "I am strong"

**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 others know how they can support you.

You don't have to do this alone.

**Create a Calm Playlist**

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.

### **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.



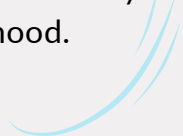
### **Fuel Your Body:**

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



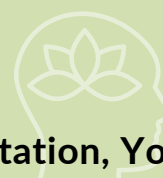
### **Move Your Body:**

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



### **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.



### **Stay Hydrated:**

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

