

# My Heart Operation



Developed by the  
**Child Life Therapy Department**  
The Children's Hospital At Westmead



## Note for families

*Talking with your child before surgery can help them to cope with the experience by knowing what to expect. The hospital environment has many unfamiliar sights, sounds, smells, people and procedures, and these can feel confusing or worrying for a child. In these situations, if not provided with honest, accurate and age appropriate information, a child may invent their own explanations or scenarios and these may be more frightening for them than the reality. Research has shown preparation that is sensitive to a child's age and stage can decrease anxiety, reduce emotional changes such as separation anxiety and sleep disturbances after surgery and facilitate positive coping.*

*Reading this book with your child will support them to gain an understanding of what they will see, hear and experience on the day of surgery and throughout their stay. Depending on your child's age, you may choose to just look and talk about some of the pictures with them or if they are older, read all of the text. You can support your child by encouraging them to talk about what they see, ask questions and discuss how they are feeling.*

*If you are not sure how to respond to your child's questions or would like further advice about age-appropriate ways to prepare them for their upcoming visit or surgery please contact the **Child Life Therapy department** on **(02) 9845 2669***



## Support for Families

*There is a team of specialists at the Heart Centre for Children who are dedicated to providing emotional care and support to infants, children and families at any stage following a diagnosis of heart disease.*

*This team includes Clinical Nurse Consultants, Nurse Practitioners, Child Life Therapists, Social workers and Psychologists. Some of the ways we can help include:*

- *Providing parents with an opportunity to talk about their experiences, worries or questions regarding their child's heart condition.*
- *Helping children and young people to cope with difficulties they may be having in relation to their heart condition, medical procedures or other aspects of life.*
- *Supporting siblings, grandparents and extended family members. For example, supporting parents with how to talk to their other children about their brother or sisters heart condition.*
- *Ongoing care and support for families who have lost a child due to heart disease.*

*If you would like to talk with a member of our family support team or make an appointment to meet, please call **(02) 9845 0088**. If we aren't able to take your call immediately, please leave a message and we will return your call as soon as possible.*



Hi! My name is Ellis.

I am five years old.

My favourite things are Superman and playing doctors.



When I was a baby, the doctor found out that my heart wasn't working properly.

No one knows why this happened.

It isn't anyone's fault. It isn't because of anything I did or said wrong.



Soon I will be having an operation to help my heart work better.

This will happen at the Children's Hospital at Westmead.





The week before my operation I visit the hospital for Pre-Admission with my Mum and Dad.

I have some tests which let the doctors and nurses see how my heart is working and make a plan for my operation.



*Would you like to know more about what happens at Pre-Admission? There is another book for you to read.*



The day before my operation I help to pack my hospital bag. I choose my favourite toy to take with me.

My Mum or Dad will stay at the hospital with me so they pack a bag as well.



*What would you like to take to hospital?*

*Who will be staying with you?*





On the morning of my operation we wake up really early. This is so I can have breakfast before we go to the hospital. Once we arrive at the hospital I won't be able to have anything to eat or drink until after my operation.



When we arrive at the hospital...



The nurse checks my temperature, blood pressure and oxygen levels.



Some bracelets with my name and birthday are placed on my arm and leg.



I take some medicine. I can have a small sip of juice or water after.



When it is time for my operation, my bed will be wheeled to a different room. My mum or dad can come with me. They will need to wear blue clothes just like the nurses and doctors. This keeps everything clean.



The doctor will place a mask over my mouth and nose. It is soft and squishy.

The mask will have special medicine put through it which will make me sleep very deeply so I don't see, feel or hear anything during the operation. The doctors won't stop giving me the medicine until the operation is finished and it is time for me to wake up.





While I am asleep, the doctors and nurses will help my heart to work better.

When the operation is finished, my bed will be moved to a hospital room.

My family will be there when I wake up and open my eyes.



I notice a few things to help my body get better after my operation...



A mask or nasal  
prongs to help me  
breathe more easily.



A small plastic straw in  
my hand or arm to give  
me medicine if I feel  
sore.







A band-aid on my  
chest



Some plastic tubes in my chest  
attached to boxes. These are  
called drains. They will come out  
before I go home.



After my operation I'm only allowed to drink a small amount. This is so my heart doesn't have to work too hard while it's getting better. I am given special star sponges dipped in water to suck on. They look a bit like lollipops. I can also suck on some ice chips. Soon I will be able to drink more.



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A person called a Physiotherapist visits me each day. They help me to breathe easily and start walking around again. We do lots of fun things together like blowing bubbles and visiting the fish tank!



I will need to stay at the hospital for a little while until the doctors say I am well enough to go home.

When I am feeling a little better, I might be able to visit the playroom, see the clown doctors or go to the Starlight room.



The doctors say I am now well enough to go home!

I will need to come back soon for a check-up.

See you later!









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