

Parental Presence on the Day of Surgery

Your child has been booked for surgery. No matter how simple or complex the surgery, we understand that no procedure is small when it comes to your child. Coming to the Alberta Children's Hospital (ACH) can be a stressful experience for the entire family.



Perioperative Parental Presence offers a parent or other support person the opportunity to stay with a child while they go to sleep in the Operating Room (OR) or once they are awake in the Post Anesthetic Care Unit (PACU)

Supporting your child in this way may reduce anxiety and may help to make everyone's experience more positive. However, not every parent or support person will feel comfortable with the OR or

PACU environment or seeing their child go off to sleep or coming out of anesthetic. If you feel that you are not able to be present in the OR or PACU, that is ok, just tell your child's care team. There are other ways that we can help reduce any stress or anxiety that you and your child may be feeling about the surgical experience.

Things that we consider when deciding if parental presence in the Operating Room is right for you and your child.

After reviewing your child's specific situation, the anesthesiologist caring for your child will give the final go ahead for parental presence as there may be situations where parental presence is not the best choice or not possible.

- ☐ Parent comfort with and ability to participate.
- ☐ Your child is at least one year of age
- ☐ Staff person available to stay with you for support.
- ☐ Complexity of the surgical case

Only one parent or support person can go with your child into the OR.

What Can I expect in the Operating Room?

When the OR is ready for your child, a porter will take you to the OR holding area where you will meet your child's OR team (surgeon, anesthesiologist, and nurse). They will go over a few things and confirm that your child is ready for the OR. The anesthesiologist will also discuss parental presence with you and your child. If parental presence is right for your family, a designated staff member will stay with you for support while you are in the OR. You will be given a gown, OR cap, and shoe coverings to wear; you may also be asked to wear a mask. Someone will help you put these items on and will walk with you into the OR.



The OR may be a new experience for you and your child and can sometimes feel quite big and overwhelming. If at any time you feel that you need to leave, this is ok, let a member of your child's care team know and someone will walk with you out of the OR.

As children become sleepy from anesthesia, some close their eyes and fall asleep smoothly. Others enter a stage of excitement where they may move their arms or legs, cry and may try and remove the mask. Your child's OR team may have to gently hold your child's arms or legs to keep them safe while they go to sleep. Some may seem dizzy, may have noisy breathing or coughing and their eyes may roll back. All of this is very normal. Your child will not remember this stage and they will be closely monitored by their OR team throughout this process.

While you are in the OR:

- It is important to stay calm and follow any direction given to you by your child's OR team.
- A member of the team may connect your child to some monitors.
- You can help comfort your child by holding their hand, speaking to them in a soft calming voice or even singing quietly.
- You are welcome to use your personal electronic device to look at pictures or videos to help distract your child.
- Do not film or take pictures while in the OR with your child
- As your child is falling asleep, the anesthesiologist will let you know when it is time for you to leave.
- Once it is time for you to leave, someone will accompany you out of the OR and help you to remove your gown and cap.
- You will be accompanied to the Day Surgery Waiting Room by a member of your child's care team where you will wait for your child's surgery to be done.



What happens when my child's surgery is done?

Once your child's surgery is complete, they will be moved to the Post Anesthetic Care Unit (PACU) where nurses will continue to care for your child as they wake up from the anesthesia. The PACU is also known as the 'wake up room' or Recovery Room. It can take up to an hour before your child is awake in the PACU; however, it is hard to predict exactly how long your child will be in the PACU.

Can I be in the PACU with my child?

Once your child is awake, your child's PACU nurse may invite one parent or support person to come into the PACU to be with your child until they are ready to be moved to their post-surgery room. Being invited to come into PACU depends on the needs of your child, how long your child will be in PACU and how busy the PACU is. PACU is a large open room, so it is important to respect the privacy of other patients and families. Being in PACU is not always possible and may not be for everyone, if you are unable to be with your child in PACU that is ok, the team will make sure that you and your child are together as soon as possible.

If you have any questions or comments about your child's surgery experience, please talk to a member of your child's care team.