

## Information for Parents / Carers Whose Child is Having an Operation

This leaflet gives information for parents/carers whose child is having an operation.

Your child is going to be admitted to the children's ward (Buxton) to have an operation under general anaesthetic. This could be for either planned surgery or as a result of an accident or emergency.

### What will happen before my child has their operation?

Before your child can have their general anaesthetic he/she will not be able to eat or drink. If their operation is a planned one please follow the advice below, if it is an emergency operation your nurse and doctor will advise you when to stop giving your child food and drink.

#### For children/young people:

- **For a morning operation** – your child must have nothing to eat from midnight the night before, then only clear fluids until 6am on the morning of their operation. After 6am nothing to eat or drink.
- **For an afternoon operation** – your child may have a light early breakfast which must be completed by 7am, then clear fluids until 11am. After 11am nothing to eat or drink.

#### For babies:

- **For a morning operation** – your baby must not have solid food after midnight the night before their operation, but can have formula milk up until 2am the morning of their operation. If breast feeding the last feed should be completed by 4am. Clear fluids can be given until 6am. After 6am nothing to eat and drink.
- **For an afternoon operation** – your baby may have a light early breakfast including formula milk feed; this must be completed by 7am. If breast feeding the last feed should be completed by 9am. Clear fluids can be given up until 11am then nothing to eat and drink.

#### Definitions:

- Clear fluids – plain water or orange/lemon squash. Please do not let your child have any fizzy drinks, fruit juices or milk.
- Light breakfast – cornflakes or similar or toast or bread. No cooked food. Porridge is acceptable.
- Your child should not eat chewing gum or sweets after midnight for a morning operation or after 7am for an afternoon operation.

It is important to follow these instructions to prevent any food or liquid in your child's stomach coming up into the back of their throat during their anaesthetic which could damage their lungs.

#### Once admitted to the ward:

- You will be seen by a surgeon and an anaesthetist who will assess your child.

- Your child will have special cream applied to the back of their hands which numbs the sensation in this area. This is in preparation for a cannula. A cannula is a very thin plastic tube that sits in the vein and allows medicines or fluid to be given directly into your child's blood stream. When the cannula is inserted a needle is used to prick the skin. Then the cannula is taped down securely and the needle thrown away.
- Your child can wear his/her own night clothes or will be given a special gown to wear for the operation.
- When it is time to go to the operating theatre, a member of the theatre team will push your child there in their cot or bed. If you have a young child who wants to be carried, that is fine.
- A medical professional will accompany you and the theatre staff member to the anaesthetic room. It is a good idea to send a spare nappy with your child so that the theatre/ recovery staff can change you baby if required.

### **What happens in the anaesthetic room?**

- Both parents can walk to theatre but usually only one parent can stay in the anaesthetic room until your child is asleep. This is due to lack of space in the room.
- Your child will go to sleep either by having anaesthetic gas through a face mask or anaesthetic medicine given into a vein through the cannula in the back of their hand.

### **What happens when my child is asleep?**

- Once your child is asleep you will be shown to children's recovery area where you can collect a pager. This enables the recovery nurses to contact you when your child's operation is finished.
- The pager works anywhere inside the hospital building so you may want to go back to the ward or go to the restaurant. If you are planning on going outside the hospital we can also take your mobile number before you leave the main theatres.
- If your child has any special toy or comforter then please feel free to hand them over to the recovery nurses and they will make sure your child gets them when he/she wakes up.

### **What happens in the recovery room?**

- After the operation, the recovery nurses will either page you or contact you via your mobile so that you can come and sit with your child. Your child may still be sleeping, but some children wake up very quickly so may be awake before you arrive.
- Your child may be very sleepy when you first see them or a little disorientated and tearful. Both reactions are completely normal.
- Due to the nature of the environment it is not appropriate to have siblings in the recovery room, but two adults are allowed.
- Your child will be attached to a monitor while they are in recovery and may be receiving some oxygen through a face mask. This is completely normal.
- Depending on the type of surgery, your child may be able to have a drink in recovery.

- Your child will have been given analgesia (pain killers) when they were asleep. Sometimes if your child wakes in pain, they will be given further analgesia before they go back to the ward.
- Your child will stay in recovery until they are fully awake, although they can go back to sleep if they want to. Once the recovery nurse is happy that your child is as comfortable as possible they will take you and your child back to the ward.
- The surgeon who carried out the operation may come and speak to you in recovery about how everything went; if they are unable to do so they will visit you back on the ward.

### **What happens after my child has had their operation?**

- Depending on the type of surgery you may be able to take your child home once they have fully recovered from the anaesthetic.
- Your child will need to have a drink and something to eat on the ward before they can go home.
- Once they have done this your nurse will remove the cannula (if no longer required) and apply a small plaster to the back of your child's hand if needed.
- Your child may also need to be reviewed by the doctors before being discharged, but this is not always necessary and often your child's nurse will tell you when you can go home.
- Please ensure you have a supply of Paracetamol and/or Ibuprofen at home when your child is discharged. If your child requires any additional or different medications, these will be prescribed and dispensed by pharmacy.

### **Discharge home:**

For at least 24 hours following a general anaesthetic your child should:

- Be supervised by a responsible adult.
- Not cycle or go out unaccompanied.
- Rest as much as possible.
- Not go to school, playschool or nursery.

Advice on how soon your child can return to school will be given by your surgeon and nurse before discharge.

For further information please speak to your ward nurse.

