



# A Teen's Calm Companion

Designed for SickKids' teens, to be read on your own or  
with your caregivers, friends or family.  
No one will see this unless you want to share it with them.

**SickKids**<sup>®</sup>

## Welcome to A Calm Companion!

Created with you in mind—with help from other teens, families and the team at SickKids. Whether you're feeling totally ready or a bit unsure about your upcoming surgery, this tool is here to help you feel more ready and supported as you get closer to your surgery.

We know that going to the hospital can bring up all kinds of feelings—nervousness, curiosity, excitement, or even uncertainty. Everyone's experience is 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, it can be more than one!**

 Nervous	 Confused	 Sad	 Curious
 Scared	 Bored	 Relieved	 Tired
 Anxious	 Brave	 Angry	 Calm
 Excited	 Hopeful	 Lonely	 Grateful

### LOOKING AT SURGERY IN A WHOLE-BODY WAY

You'll find tips, activities and space to write or draw your thoughts. Choose the tips that work best for you and make a plan for surgery day! **SickKids resources are listed on page 4, if you would like more support.**

Your comfort and care are our priority!

Your caregivers play an important role in supporting you through surgery.

**To learn about available support for caregivers, please refer to page 11 of [A Calm Companion](#).**



# TAKE PART IN YOUR CARE

You're not just a patient - you're part of the team. Your voice matters and your choice matters. Here's how you can take an active role in your care:

## Learn About What's Happening

Ask questions about your procedure, medications, symptoms and recovery. Knowing what matters to you, can help you feel more at ease!

## Talk to Us

We're here to listen. Your care team at SickKids wants to hear what's on your mind—your concerns, your ideas, your hopes. We'll work with you to create a plan that fits your family's needs.

## What's Important to You?

Your beliefs, values and identity matter. SickKids respects your cultural, spiritual and religious beliefs and we'll do our best to support them.

Let us know what's meaningful to you.

**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](#)



A mental health hub for youth, by youth.



# I LOVE MYSELF

## SICKKIDS' RESOURCES

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



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

Supports your 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.**

# MIND-BODY TIPS

These activities may help you feel calm and safe, balance your body and mind and give you something fun to focus on; providing you with comfort when you need it.

Check all the boxes that sound good to you.

## **Box Breathing**

Try this simple breathing pattern:

- Inhale for 4 seconds
- Hold for 4 seconds
- Exhale for 4 seconds
- Hold for 4 seconds

Repeat a few times, it helps slow your heart rate and clear your mind.

## **Positive Self-Talk**

Say things like:

- “I’ve got this”
- “I’m strong and supported”
- “I can do hard things”

It might feel weird at first; science shows that your brain listens to what you tell it.

## **Mindfulness Videos**

Discover meditation and mindfulness videos on the [Mental Health Learning Hub Playlist](#).

Focus on your breath for a few minutes to help reset your nervous system.



## **Create a Calm Playlist**

Music can change your mood fast.

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!

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## **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.

**DRAW OR DOODLE HOW YOU FEEL TODAY OR  
WRITE A LETTER TO YOUR FUTURE SELF**

# BODY AND MOVEMENT

Your body and brain work best when you give them what they need. These tips help you stay energized, focused and ready for your surgery day.

## Move your body:

Engage in activities that feel good for you. Moving your body helps release special chemicals in your brain that may help you relax and boost your mood.

## Fuel your body:

Don't skip meals in the days leading up to your surgery.

Eating nourishing foods gives your body the energy it needs to heal, think clearly, and feel strong.

**Remember no food after midnight before surgery!**

## 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.

## Stay Hydrated:

Be sure to stay well-hydrated by drinking plenty of water in the days before your surgery.

**You will need to stop drinking 3 hours before to your procedure.** It helps your body function better and can even improve your mood and focus.

## Substance Use:

For your safety, it is important to let your Anesthesiologist or Pre-Op Nurse know if you use any substances—vaping, alcohol or other drugs. Being honest helps your care team plan the safest approach for your procedure—no judgement.

# 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 the stressful parts of surgery.
- Helps you stay still and comfortable when getting anesthesia.
- 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 care team time to get ready without feeling rushed. Don't forget to bring any comfort items that help you feel relaxed and calm—we want you to feel as comfortable as possible.

## Questions for your healthcare team

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## Ask Questions

Talk with your care 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 5



## 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](#)



# HELPFUL TIPS

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## Health Check

If you feel sick in the 2 weeks before your surgery, call:  
**416-813-7910 Ext. 227502**  
leave a message  
A nurse will call you back

## Questions

If you have any questions not related to illness, reach out to your surgeon's office.

## Important Reminders

If you come to the hospital alone, you must have a caregiver who can pick you up and stay with you after surgery.

Sometimes surgeries are delayed or canceled because of emergencies. If this happens, we'll let you know as soon as possible.

## Get Ready at Home

- Follow the bathing instructions before your procedure (check the website for details)
- Remove jewelry, make-up, artificial nails, nail polish and contact lenses
- Tie back long hair with plastic (non-metal) elastics
- If you have your period, use a pad instead of a tampon on surgery day

## What to Bring

- Your health card
- Your medication or a photo of your medication
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Bringing something familiar, such as a hoodie, stuffed animal, photo, or favorite toy, can help you feel more grounded and secure. Wearing soft, loose-fitting clothing before and after surgery can make you feel comfortable and calm. Choose items that are easy to put on and take off.

# YOUR SPACE, YOUR VOICE

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What's something I'm looking forward to?

What's on my mind right now?

What's something I wish people understood about how I am feeling?

What am I most nervous or curious about?

Who helps me feel safe or supported?

What's something I've done recently that I'm proud of?

Spending time with someone you trust, whether a caregiver, sibling or friend, can make a significant difference. You don't even need to talk; just being together can provide a sense of support.