

Pre-surgery therapy for children

Children awaiting surgery are usually very afraid. Their fear may affect their behaviour before the operation, or even after. They need help. Encouraging them to play to distract them from thinking about the operation is effective therapy.

The University of Hong Kong carried out a study on pre-surgery stress suffered by children. It recruited 203 children, aged between seven and twelve, for the study.

The children were divided into two groups. One group was told about surgery in simple language to help them better understand what it is. The children were shown around the hospital – even the operating theatre – where they were encouraged to handle different operating tools and perform pre-surgery on a doll.

The other group was cared for in the normal way and spent much of the time playing.

The study revealed that getting the children to play was more effective in reducing their anxiety than just trying to explain to them what surgery means.