

## Fact Sheet 1

# ACTIVITIES PARENTS COULD CONSIDER DOING ON THE DAY OF SURGERY

Waiting at the hospital on the day of your child's craniofacial surgery can be nerve-wracking. Here are some constructive activities that parents may consider while waiting in the hospital for their child's surgery.

- 1. Read or Listen to Audiobooks:** Bring along a book or download audiobooks to help pass the time and distract yourself from worrying thoughts.
- 2. Journalling:** Write down your thoughts, feelings, and updates to keep track of your child's journey.
- 3. Catch Up on Emails or Tasks:** Use this time to quietly check things off your list (without feeling pressure).
- 4. Brain Teasers or Word Puzzles:** Sudoku, crossword puzzles, or word searches can be engaging and help preoccupy your mind.
- 5. Small board/card games:** Many are compact enough to fit in your bag and can be a great distraction during wait times. Focusing on game rules and play can provide a helpful mental break.
- 6. Watch TV:** Many hospitals have waiting areas with large TV screens, or take your own laptop and binge a short, light-hearted comedy or drama series.
- 7. Crafts or Knitting:** Bring small, portable crafts like knitting or crochet to keep your hands busy.
- 8. Deep Breathing and Meditation:** Practice relaxation techniques to manage stress and stay calm.
- 9. Stay Connected:** Use this time to update family and friends via text or phone calls.
- 10. Listen to Music or Podcasts:** Use headphones to listen to soothing music or a podcast. Consider before the day what you might like to listen to.



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11. **Organise Photos or Digital Files:** Sort through photos or organise digital files on a laptop or tablet.
12. **Support Groups:** Connect with other parents on Facebook who have been through the same process, for support and shared experiences.
13. **Express milk:** If you are breastfeeding, expressing milk (using your own pump or one provided by the hospital) can help pass the time and bring a sense of comfort and purpose, knowing you are supporting your baby even while they are in surgery.

These activities can help manage stress, pass the time, and maintain a sense of productivity during what can be a challenging wait.



**If you'd rather leave the hospital but remain close by (physically and mentally), here's a list of constructive, low-stress activities you could try:**

1. **Go for a Walk:** Explore a nearby park, garden, or even just walk the hospital grounds to get some fresh air and stretch your legs. Try walking barefoot and feel the grass between your toes!
2. **Grab a Coffee or Meal:** Find a quiet café nearby for a comforting bite and a mental reset.
3. **Book a Short Massage or Spa Treatment:** If there's a spa or massage therapy nearby, it can be a helpful way to relieve built-up tension.
4. **Sit Somewhere Peaceful:** Look for a quiet bench, courtyard, or green space to reflect and unwind.
5. **Head back to the Room where you're Staying:** take a bath, read a book, watch a movie on TV or take a nap.
6. **Try to Catch up on Sleep:** many parents are exhausted by the time surgery day arrives, with some not sleeping at all the night before. Consider catching up on some much needed sleep.

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7. **Go to a Local Cinema:** If the surgery is expected to take hours, consider going to a nearby cinema and watching a movie.
8. **Meet with a Loved One:** Invite a friend or family member to sit with you, even if just for a little while.
9. **Do some Physical Exercise:** any activity that requires you to regulate breathing, expend nervous energy and supports rhythmic, repetitive and muscle memory action (e.g., swimming, cycling).
10. **Consider trying Geocaching:** It's a real-world treasure hunt with hidden caches all over the world — including near most hospitals. Searching for nearby caches can help clear your mind and give you a reason to take a walk. You can explore it at [geocaching.com](https://www.geocaching.com), or download the app (note: the full version may have a fee).
11. **Browse a Local Bookstore or Gift Shop:** Get a small book, puzzle, or a little gift for your child to give post-surgery.
12. **Journal in a New Spot:** Bring your notebook or notes app and find a quiet corner or garden setting to process your thoughts.
13. **Plan Something for Your Child:** Make a welcome-back sign, prepare a comfort basket, or draft a social media update for family.
14. **Run a Quick Errand:** If it won't take you too far, take care of a nearby errand that's been on your mind.
15. **Write Letters or Notes:** Write a future note to your child or a thank-you note to the care team.



**Just be sure to leave your contact number with the surgical team and stay within the general vicinity of the hospital in case they need to reach you quickly.**

This information is based on the expertise of clinicians who work with families affected by craniofacial conditions and the lived experience of parents with children who have been diagnosed with craniosynostosis. We thank everyone who contributed to this fact sheet.



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### How we can support you:

- Care packs
- Financial assistance
- Family support coordinator
- Connection to other families

