Craniosynostosis is a condition in which the bones in your child’s skull have closed too early. This may cause the head shape to be abnormal. This condition is generally present at birth. Your child is scheduled to have this abnormality surgically corrected.

What to Expect
The day before surgery an anesthesiologist (doctor) and nurse practitioner will interview you about your child’s past health history and examine him/her.

A lab technician or nurse will obtain a blood sample from your child. A nurse may also need to obtain a urine sample from your child. These tests are needed before surgery can be done. Your child will also have some special skull CAT scans done prior to surgery being scheduled. Your child will not be able to eat solids or full liquids past 12 midnight. He/she may have clear liquids (Pedialyte/Apple Juice/ Sterile H20) until 4 hours before the operation is scheduled to begin.

Day of Surgery
Your child should have a bath the night before the operation. Wash his/her hair thoroughly. Hospital pajamas will be given to you for your child to wear in the Holding Room and in the Operating Room.

Your child may be given some liquid medicine to calm him/her before an IV is started for surgery. Numbing medicine will be injected or a cream applied to the site where the IV will be started to give sedation for operation.

Your child will be in surgery approximately 4 to 6 hours and after surgery will be in the recovery room from 1 to 2 hours. You should wait in your child’s Holding Room to hear from your doctor in person or by telephone, unless he has told you to wait in another place.

Once the nursing staff has gotten your child comfortable, and as long as there are no other emergencies, you may wait in the Recovery Room with him/her until they are taken to PICU. Your child will spend one or two days in the pediatric intensive care unit after surgery.

After Surgery
Your child will have a dressing over the incision on top of the head. The incision line may have sutures or staples in it to keep it closed. The dressing will soon be removed but may possibly be reapplied or a blue surgery hat applied if your child scratches the incision line.

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Your child’s eyes, face, and head will be swollen and puffy. There may be some bruising present after a day or two. We will want your child to keep his/her head elevated to decrease the swelling. This can be accomplished by keeping the head of the bed elevated, using pillows, or an infant seat. Your child may sit in your lap, or be up in a stroller or wagon as long as his/her head is elevated. You will need to do this until the swelling has resolved. Your child will need to turn more often when lying in bed so that the swelling remains equal on each side of the face. Your child may continue to lie on his/her stomach as long as their head is elevated. Your child may continue to walk if doing so.

Your child will soon be able to start clear liquids and his/her diet will be advanced if there is no nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.

Your child will have an IV which will remain until he/she is tolerating a diet again and/or antibiotics are completed.

**Home Care**

You may wash the hair around your child’s incision line, but do not get the staples or sutures wet. After the sutures are removed you may get his/her head wet; however, do not scrub the incision line. This takes approximately 1 to 2 months to heal entirely.

The top of your child’s head may be soft for some time after surgery because some of the swelling may remain. You will need to handle your child’s head gently and encourage quieter activities than usual for your child. Your child must be careful not to bump into any hard objects or fall. You may need to pad your child’s crib rails or play area if she/he crawls.

**Notify your doctor if you notice any of the following symptoms:**

- Any bleeding from the incision line as though it may have opened up. There may be some small scabs present where the sutures or staples were. They may bleed a small amount if your child scratches them or they rub off while bathing. This small amount of bleeding is normal.
- Any drainage, excessive redness or excessive swelling around the incision line as though it is not healing.
- If temperature elevation is higher than 101°F.

If you have any further questions, notify your doctor, Vanderbilt Emergency Room, or the Vanderbilt Operator at 322-5000.