



Preparing for Multi-Level Surgery (SEMLS)

What is SEMLS?

SEMLS stands for “single-event multilevel surgery”. The surgery involves making many corrections to soft tissue and bone all at one time. This surgery can impact your family’s life for many months. This handout describes some of the changes that you can expect. Use it to help you make plans before surgery.

How long will my child be in the hospital?

You and your child will need to reach certain physical therapy goals before being discharged. This usually takes 5 to 7 days. Physical therapy will start 1 to 2 days after surgery. During physical therapy, you and your child will work on goals for getting out of bed, doing daily exercises and learning how to transfer.



How will my child’s mobility be affected by the surgery?

Your child will need to change how they move around for 6 to 8 weeks.

Wheelchair

- Your child may not be able to use their own wheelchair after surgery due to their positioning needs.
- Your child may also need other pieces of mobility equipment. We will talk about this with you and help you to make a plan.

Transfers

- **You will need to plan for what help your child will need with transfers into the car and home for at least the first 2 weeks or so.**
- If your child weighs more than 50 pounds, plan on having 2 people to help with transfers. You may also want to see if using a Hoyer lift is an option for your home. We can give you information about a Hoyer lift.
- If your child weighs less than 50 pounds, and you can lift them by yourself, you can continue to do this after their surgery. Keep in mind that your child's casts or splints will add as much as 10 extra pounds of weight.

Standing and walking

- If the surgery does not include any bone work, your child may be allowed to bear some weight thru standing. However, they will very likely **not** be comfortable doing this for about 10 to 14 days after their surgery.
- Your child will be able to work on regaining their standing transfers and walking with outpatient or home based physical therapy.

Will my child wear a brace or cast?

Many children need immobilization and support to their legs after surgery. This is often done with:

- Hinged knee braces
 - Knee immobilizers
 - Abduction bar
 - Abduction pillow
 - Casts
 - Hip orthosis
- Wearing a brace or cast can affect sleeping, traveling, moving around, going to the bathroom and bathing.
 - Most braces and casts need to be worn almost all the time and at night for 6 weeks. After this they can be worn for shorter periods of time, as decided by your child's provider.

How will my child's bathing habits change?

- You will need to give your child sponge baths for 2 to 3 weeks. They will not be allowed to soak or submerge their incisions until they have healed.
- When the surgeon removes the casts or allows you to remove their braces for bathing, a shower chair may be helpful for the short term.
 - Insurance may not cover a shower chair
 - You may be able to find a shower chair at second hand stores
- Handheld showerheads can also be helpful. They can be found at your local home improvement store and some pharmacies.

Will my child's bathroom habits change?

Your child may need help using the bathroom after surgery.

- If your child's wheelchair cannot move around easily in your bathroom, a bedside commode may be helpful.
 - Insurance may not cover a commode
 - You may be able to rent one from medical equipment vendors
 - Commodes can sometimes be found at second hand stores

Will my child's transportation habits change?

Your child will likely need special accommodations for transportation. Not all vehicles can safely transport children after surgery.

- If your child will be put in a SPICA cast or abduction splint, they will most likely not be able to use their own car seat.
- If your child's care team recommends using an EZ-on vest, you must use a car with a bench seat, and there cannot be any other children or car seats on that bench seat.
- You may want to consider borrowing or renting a car.
- You may not be able to fit the same number of people in the car while using the recommended care safety plan.
- Braces may sometimes be removed for transport, but plans can vary. This will depend on your child's procedure, the type of car used and how far your child will travel.
- If your child normally rides in their wheelchair for vehicle transport, keep in mind that our rental wheelchairs are not approved to be transported in vehicles with patients riding in them.
- You will need to plan for how your child will get to school each day.
- Special modifications are usually needed for 6 to 8 weeks after surgery, but times may vary.

Will my child's school habits change?

Some schools are not well equipped to care for patients for the first 6 to 8 weeks after surgery. Talk with your child's school as soon as possible about what resources they have. Your child will need:

- Elevator access
- Extra time to go from one class to another
- Help with carrying a backpack, getting lunch, books and school supplies
- Help using the bathroom
- A designated person at school to make sure their activity restrictions are being followed and that their brace or cast is being worn and cared for properly

To Learn More

- Orthopedics
206-987-2109
- Occupational & Physical Therapy
206- 987-2113
- Ask your child's healthcare provider
- www.seattlechildrens.org

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your child's nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.

The school may need certain paperwork after surgery. Please talk to your child's school to see if they need:

- School absence excuse forms
- Home hospital forms
- Authorization to exchange medical information forms
- Activity restriction note
- Medical clearance to return to school forms
- Authorizations to give medication at school

We can help you get these forms

Will my child need therapy after leaving the hospital?

Your child may need additional therapy after surgery. Ask your care provider how often your child will need to go to therapy.

- These appointments need to be scheduled before your child's surgery.
- Some physical therapy facilities have long wait lists.
- Physical therapy should be scheduled as soon as possible once you have a surgery date.

The rehabilitation team may recommend that your child return to the hospital for rehabilitation

- Not all children qualify for inpatient rehabilitation (called "rehab").
- If your child qualifies, the decision to admit to inpatient rehab is normally made around 4 to 8 weeks after surgery.
- There may be a 1 to 2 week wait for your child's insurance to approve the request.
- We will decide the length of the inpatient rehab stay based on your child's needs.

Planning summary

- Is there another person to help with transfers and care of my child?
- What do we do if we have stairs in our home?
- Will a larger wheelchair fit in and around our home?
- Will we need a Hoyer lift?
- Will we need a shower chair, handheld shower and bathroom commode?
- Vehicle with a bench seat
- Other: _____

To find medical equipment for loan or small fee, read the "Resources for Wheelchairs and Medical Equipment" at www.seattlechildrens.org/clinics-programs/physical-therapy/patient-family-resources.

Seattle Children's offers interpreter services for Deaf, hard of hearing or non-English speaking patients, family members and legal representatives free of charge. Seattle Children's will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Call the Family Resource Center at 206-987-2201.

This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Seattle Children's. However, your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child's healthcare provider.

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