

# WebTIPS helps make surgery less scary for children—and their parents

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Zeev N. Kain, MD, MBA

A newly developed website provides parents and children with individualized information and support—based on factors like coping style and levels of worry and fear—to help lower anxiety before outpatient surgery in children, according to a pair of articles in the April issue of *Anesthesia & Analgesia*.

The papers report on the development of the "Web-based Tailored Intervention Preparation for Surgery" (WebTIPS) project, which provides information and strategies to help children and [parents](#) prepare for [surgery](#) and [anesthesia](#). A preliminary evaluation suggests that WebTIPS is effective in reducing anxiety levels on the day of surgery.

The lead investigator was Zeev N. Kain, MD, MBA, an anesthesiologist and chairman of the Department of Anesthesiology & Perioperative Care at UC Irvine.

## **WebTIPS Lowers Kids' and Parents' Anxiety before Surgery**

Developed with funding from the National Institutes of Health (grant R01 HD056104), WebTIPS is an interactive website for parents and children to use in preparing for common outpatient surgical procedures in children. After logging in, parents complete a brief questionnaire regarding characteristics such as their coping style and anxiety level and their child's level of worry and fear. Based on the responses, WebTIPS provides individualized information, reassurance and advice.

The website includes a section that shows children what to expect before, during and after surgery. Features like animations and games familiarize children will happen at the hospital—for example, a game lets them place an anesthesia mask on cartoon characters.

The evaluation showed that WebTIPS reduced anxiety for both parents and children. For example, on entering the operating room, children's anxiety scores were substantially reduced if they had first been shown what to expect WebTIPS. WebTIPS may also have reduced "emergence delirium," the agitation sometimes seen in children when recovering from anesthesia. Parents rated the WebTIPS site helpful and easy to use.

More and more children are undergoing [outpatient surgery](#), with no overnight hospital stay. Due to time and cost considerations, many young patients receive little or no preparation before their program. Lack of preparation contributes to increased [anxiety](#) in children and parents alike.

WebTIPS takes advantage of widespread Internet access to provide individualized, evidence-based information to families getting ready for outpatient pediatric surgery. The authors believe that parents and children were able to "engage repeatedly" with WebTIPS in the days before surgery, increasing its effectiveness.

Kain and his coauthors plan further studies, including evaluation of the website's effects on use of pain medications and pain control after surgery. "WebTIPS has the potential to transform the delivery of behavioral interventions for [children](#) and families undergoing surgery, will likely reduce hospital costs, and can reach a broad health care provider and patient base," he said.

**More information:** *Anesthesia & Analgesia*,  
[journals.lww.com/anesthesia-an ... eparation of.30.aspx](https://journals.lww.com/anesthesia-analgesia/abstract/2015/04000/evaluation_of_webtips_for_preoperative_anxiety_in_pediatric_patients.30.aspx)

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