

# How do I prepare my child for COMING INTO HOSPITAL?



We know that there are a lot of things to think about when your child is coming in for surgery. You may have questions about what to expect, how to help your child prepare and how to cope with your child's questions or worries.

This toolkit contains information to help you and your child find out more about what will happen when you come in for surgery and what to expect. We will talk about how you can support your child, how you can help prepare them for coming into hospital, how you can spot if they are becoming worried or upset and things you might do to help them cope.



# THINGS TO REMEMBER

We know that young people often:

- understand more than adults think
- benefit from being involved
- feel safer when they know what is going on
- are resilient as well as vulnerable
- can overcome difficulties and adversity with support and love and can have a future filled with hope

We know that children and young people cope much better when they understand why they are coming into hospital. This is because they know what to expect and as a result can feel more in control.

For example, if a child or young person thinks they are well and come in for treatment this can be confusing. They may think 'Why am I going to hospital if I feel ok? Why didn't anyone tell me I'm not okay?'

If children don't have enough information about what is going on and why they are in hospital, they tend to 'fill in the gaps' and sometimes assume that what will happen or what is going on is worse than is it, 'if no one is telling me what is going on or they are whispering about me then it must be bad.'

When children understand what is happening they feel they have more control and they can develop trust in the adults around them.



# Top tips and strategies

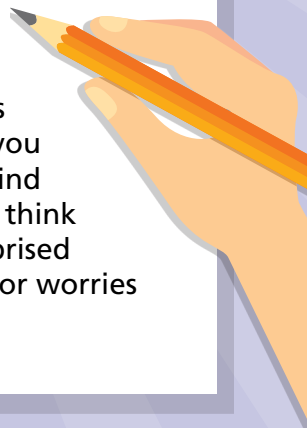
## **Allow time to prepare and adjust**

Making time to prepare and adjust will help children and young people understand and cope with coming in. It can help to:

- talk about coming into hospital as part of a continuing conversation
- let them know they have support from their parents/ carers
- talk about hospital and treatments in words that are easy to understand or make sense to your child (see our “talking to your child” toolkit)
- think about how to help them understand what is happening, as well as telling them the information

## **Check what your child understands**

We know that sometimes children and young people mishear things or come to conclusions that are not true. For example, a child that was told ‘you have an odema in your belly’ heard ‘you have a demon in your belly’. So it can help to find out what they think will happen and why they think they are coming into hospital. You may be surprised that sometimes your child may have questions or worries about things that are hard to predict.



Using this tool can help you find out about what your child knows and what questions they might have.

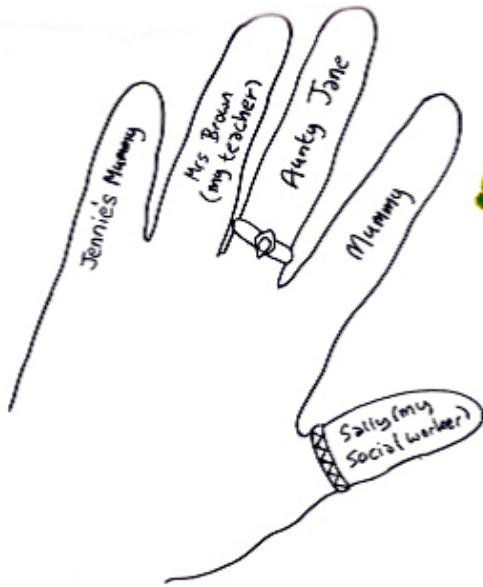
1. I am going to have surgery for...
2. It will help me by...
3. These are things that will happen...
4. Firstly, I will... e.g. go to hospital
5. Secondly, I will... e.g. meet the nurse
6. Thirdly, I will... e.g. stay in a hospital bed

## **Help your child plan their stay**

You can find out what your child would like from their stay in hospital by using this tool and answering the following questions:

1. Things I would like when I'm in hospital... e.g watch a DVD, see the play specialist, contact my friends
2. Things I'm looking forward to afterwards are...
3. Questions I would like to ask are...
4. If I feel upset I would like to...

You can also help your child plan who they would like to support them by using a helping hand. This helping hand can help your child identify who can help them if they feel worried about hospital.



## Helping Hands



Telephone numbers  
Sally 299766  
Aunty Jane 386837



Help your child create their own by drawing around your child's own hand, help them to write on each finger who is there to help them and also you can help them write next to each finger what help they would like from this person.

## Practical planning and preparation

**What happens about school?** The teachers in the hospital school can make sure that your child does not miss out on school while they are in hospital. If possible, speak to your child's class teacher about your child's upcoming admission and ask them for some work to bring in with you. Don't worry if this is not possible; the hospital teachers will contact your child's school once they arrive.

**What do I pack for my child?** Usual daily medicines, all equipment you might use, clothes (nightwear and day clothes), slippers, outdoor shoes and trainers for exercising, bath towel and toiletries (toothbrush, toothpaste, soap and shampoo), favourite snacks, favourite toys, games, books, magazines, DVDs, music, laptop, crafts for entertainment. You can also bring your child's favourite blankets, pillows or duvets if you like.

**What do I pack for me?** Remember to bring food and things to do for yourself because the ward will only provide food for your child. Tea and coffee as well as wi-fi is available for free on the wards. If you are planning on staying overnight please remember an overnight bag and toiletries.

**Call the ward before you come in.** Within the wards at the children's hospital, the availability of beds changes on a daily basis. Before leaving home on the day of your admission call the hospital to check everything is as planned and to find out what time the bed will be available for you.



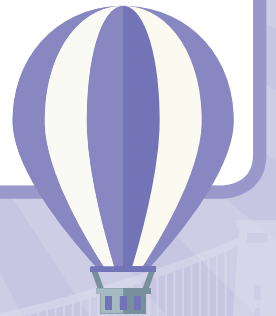
# WHAT SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE?

## Working with your medical team

We want to help and support you. Please tell us about what support your child needs and any questions that they might have so we can support them. If you feel your child needs extra support, please tell us.

Our play team are here to assist if your child needs extra help in getting used to the hospital and coping with coming in. Your specialist nursing team can also help you with answering questions and how to help your child cope.

Some services have specific psychology support that can help you with tips, ideas and strategies to help your child cope and they can work with your child to help them cope.



# WHAT SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE?

## Useful links

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There are other places you can go for help. Please try these links of some useful websites and resources that you may also like to look at.

<http://media.chop.edu/data/files/kidshealthgalaxy/index.html>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/grownups/get-well-soon-hospital>





These toolkits have been written by NHS clinical psychologists and neuropsychologists working for University Hospitals Bristol. They have been co-designed with service users and healthcare staff. These toolkits are only intended to provide general advice and information. Please discuss your individual needs with your doctor or specialist nurse. If you would like more information about psychology services please go to:

<http://www.uhbristol.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/support-for-patients/psychological-health-services/>

We would like to thank patients and other healthcare staff for their contributions to this toolkit.

For access to other patient toolkits please go to the following address:

<http://www.uhbristol.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/support-for-patients/psychological-health-services/resources/>

For this leaflet in large print, audio or PDF format, please email [patientleaflets@uhbristol.nhs.uk](mailto:patientleaflets@uhbristol.nhs.uk)

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