



Hospital Visits

What to do when your child goes to the hospital

You & Your Child

Going to the hospital can be frightening for a child.

Feeling sick or being hurt is scary enough for young children. They are frightened when unusual things happen with their bodies, such as when they throw up, have diarrhea, or bleed.

And when children go to a hospital, they enter a strange place where strangers sometimes do things that may scare them or even hurt them, such as giving them a shot. Children don't always understand that these strangers are trying to make them get better so they can go home.

At least one parent should try to be with the child at the hospital as much as possible. Having you around can help ease your child's fears.

Hospitals are also busy places and children need someone to watch out for them. With you around, your child stands a better chance of getting the right medicine and proper medical attention.

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What you can do when you child goes to the hospital.



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What to do when your child goes to the hospital

Try to remain calm

You will naturally be concerned when your child goes to the hospital. But remaining calm is important.

Be with your child, hold your child's hand, be caring. Try not to appear nervous, even if you are.

Children learn how to react from watching the people around them. Being calm and upbeat will go a long way toward helping them through a trying time.

Don't get upset if your child behaves strangely with you

Even when parents are calm, loving, and supportive, children will sometimes blame them – or themselves – for their accident or illness.

Be patient and understanding if your child gets angry, greets you warily, or gets clingy or fearful for a while.

Being sick, injured, and in the hospital is something that may take your child a little while to get over.

An accident is no time to lecture

If your child was in an accident, you shouldn't lecture him or her about how the accident could have been prevented.

Most children feel guilty that they caused the accident in the first place, especially if their parents had warned them to be careful.

What you should do is to assure your child that "accidents happen."

When you can't prepare for the hospital

If your child is in an accident or there is an emergency and you don't have time to prepare for going to the hospital, do the following:

- Stay with your child in the hospital as much as possible, including overnight, if that is allowed.
- Have someone bring familiar things and pajamas from home, if the hospital will allow it.

Preparing for the hospital

Here are some steps you should take if you know in advance that your child will need to go to the hospital.

Discuss medical procedures with your doctors

Find out exactly what will be done to your child and how long the procedures usually take.

Also, find out how the doctor expects your child to feel after the procedure, and how long your child is expected to be in the hospital.

Explain to your child what will happen

Using simple language, explain to your child what will happen to him or her in the hospital. Try not to frighten. Don't use gory details. But don't avoid the truth.

Explain what the hospital room will be like, that there will be nurses to care for your child at all times, that food will be delivered on trays, and explain when you will be there with your child.

If your child will undergo anesthesia, explain that it helps him or her to go to sleep while the doctor does the operation. "That way, you don't feel anything." But don't tell your child it will "put you to sleep" because a child may associate that with pets being put to death.

Find out what personal belongings your child can bring to the hospital

If your child is older, you might let him or her pack for the hospital. Familiar toys, books, and pajamas sometimes help children feel more comfortable in a strange place, such as a hospital.

Listen to your child's questions

Children sometimes have incorrect ideas about what goes on at a hospital and what it will be like for them. You need to listen, and even ask, to help them put their fears to rest.

