



Tips for preparing to go to the hospital

You are the best person to help your child during a hospital experience.



Taking care of yourself and staying calm will help your child stay calm.

Knowing what may happen in the hospital helps you feel more comfortable. Write down all your questions, including any your child has but you can't answer. Go through the list with your child's doctor and other hospital staff until you're comfortable with the answers.

Planning ahead for the changes in your family's routine will help you be less anxious while your child is in the hospital. Catch up on your bills, stock up on groceries, and cook and freeze meals ahead of time in case the hospital stay is extended. Ask family members and friends to help out.

It is helpful to clearly label anything you bring in from home with your child's last name.

Remember, as you discuss the going to the hospital and/or surgery, that not only your words, but nonverbal signals communicate your assurance: your tone of voice, facial expressions, gestures, and body language convey powerful messages. If you appear fearful, your child is likely to feel fearful, regardless of the words you use to explain things.

We encourage you or a family member to stay with your child as much as possible. We provide sleeping accommodations in your child's room. If there are times when you have to leave, tell your child when and where you have to go and when you will be back. It is not recommended that you try to slip away unnoticed. If you can't be back when promised, call to let him and the staff know.

Although a hospital stay can be difficult, it can also be a growing time for your family. Your experience can also help others. Please write the hospital when you get home and tell us what went well and what we could do better.



Infant (0-12 months old)

- Bring familiar items that will comfort your baby, a favorite toy, mobile, blanket, or pacifier.
- Your presence and bonding time is most important for your infant.
- Sing and play music that helps your child relax.



Children's Hospital
New Orleans
LCMC Health

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Toddler (1-3 years old)

- Allow choices, for example, a favorite toy, pajamas or change of clothes.
- Having familiar items will help your child feel safe and relaxed.
- Play with your child using toy medical kits.
- Young kids also will benefit from practicing on a doll or stuffed teddy bear with toy doctor-kit "instruments." Your child can take the toy's "temperature" and "pulse" and listen to its "heartbeat" and "breathing."



Preschooler (3-5 years old)

- Talk to your preschooler about the hospital.
- Play is how preschoolers learn. Playing hospital or doctor will be helpful.
- Let your child know that the hospital stay is about fixing things and is not a punishment.
- Reassure your child that they are not in the hospital because they did something wrong.
- Children under five are most concerned with being separated from their parents and being abandoned.
- Be honest. For example, don't tell your child that nothing will hurt.
- Use simple explanations for things your child will experience. For example:
 - Blood pressure cuff "arm hug"
 - Stretcher "a bed with wheels"
 - Anesthesia "sleepy air"
 - Recovery room "wake up room"



Elementary school-age (5-12 years old)

- Answer questions or concerns they have about the hospital experience.
- Give simple explanations (refer to preschool simple explanations above).
- Because school-age children understand more, it is essential that serious medical conversations not take place in front of your child.
- Many kids fear that an operation will be painful. It can help to explain that a special doctor, called an anesthesiologist, gives medicine to make patients sleep very deeply so they won't feel anything during the operation and once it's finished, they'll wake up. (Older kids, in particular, need special assurances that they will wake up.)
- Prepare your child for things they might see after a procedure, such as stitches or IV tubes.



Teen (12-19 years old)

- Include your teenager in discussions and decisions about their hospital experience.
- Be honest. For example, don't say nothing is going to hurt and if you don't know answer to any of their questions, say you will find out.
- Empower your teen to ask doctors and hospital staff questions about their care, procedures and schedule.
- Ask your teenager how you can help them through their hospital experience.
- Teens are learning to be independent and starting to make their own decisions. It is important to respect their privacy.
- Wireless internet is available for your teen to use so he or she can stay connected with the outside world if you have a laptop to bring to the hospital.