Children’s service

Parents’ guide to the children’s wards

This leaflet has been written to help your understanding of your child’s stay in hospital and answers many commonly asked questions.

It discusses:

- How you should prepare both yourself and your child for their stay. This includes how to talk to your child about their stay and what to bring with you.
- What to expect on arrival at the children’s wards
- Staying with your child in hospital and visitors
- Contact details and how to find Addenbrooke’s

Preparing your child for hospital

There are always 101 questions that come to mind when told your child needs to be admitted to hospital. If it is a planned admission some weeks or months in the future, there is a good opportunity to plan and prepare for this with your child. Below we have listed some of the commonly asked questions, with the hope it may help make the whole experience a little easier for all.

Should I tell my child about their planned hospital admission?

Yes, children will often sense that there is something their parents are concerned about. If children feel things are being kept ‘secret’, they may become fearful of the unknown, and become too frightened to ask. It is important to be honest with your child so they can trust you and feel secure.

When is the best time to talk to my child about the planned admission?

Children are often present at the consultation with the doctor, so they may pick up on what is being said. It can be useful to ‘check out’ what they understand and how they feel about what was said by the doctor. They may have a whole jumble of emotions and may experience feelings from fear to excitement. Explanations should be brief, honest and consistent. If your child asks questions, your answers should be direct and simple.

Try not to give too much information at once; this should be based on your child’s need for information. Children often need time to process new information gradually.

How will I prepare my child for hospital?

- Talk about the admission in a calm, reassuring manner, allowing time to listen to and answer your child’s questions and feelings. This should relate to your child’s needs, and care should be taken not to ‘go on about it’.
A pre admission visit to the ward or department may help you and your child to familiarise yourselves with the hospital and give you an opportunity to talk about who you met and what you saw. (Telephone the ward to arrange a visit.)

Storybooks about hospital and visits to the doctors are available from local libraries and book shops

‘Hospital role play’ such as acting out with dolls and teddies, hospital play kit, and dressing up can be useful

Drawing or painting a picture of what they might see or do in hospital

Helping to pack their hospital bag

A useful link to help you prepare your child: [http://www.rcoa.ac.uk/childrensinfo](http://www.rcoa.ac.uk/childrensinfo)

**When should I begin preparation for hospital admission?**

As a general guide, the younger the child, the closer to the admission date the better, as young children have difficulty in understanding the concept of time.

**What if my child is upset and not wanting to go?**

Gentle reassurance and listening to your child’s fears will help. Recognise that this will be a new experience for you all and that it is OK to have all sorts of feelings. Reassure your child that you will be able to stay with them. Talk about whom you will meet and the kinds of play activities they may join in with.

**What should we take with us?**

It will be important to involve your child in choosing what to pack into their hospital bag.

**Choices may include:**

- Cool comfortable day clothes (it can be warm on the wards)
- Night clothes
- Slippers or comfortable shoes to wear around the wards, preferably with soft soles to reduce the noise at night
- Toothpaste, toothbrush and other wash things
- Nappies and special cup/bottle, as needed
- One or two of their favourite toys, or comforter
- Books and activities
- Photos of Family/friends/pets
- Some school work if term-time
- We have plenty of toys, tapes, videos, games and drawing things

**Remember to bring in:**

- Clothes and wash things for yourself
- Your child’s regular medication with doses
- Feed pumps if necessary
- Drinks and snacks for yourself
- Books/magazines to read
- Any readymade milk if required
The hospital cannot take responsibility for lost or damaged items. If bringing something special or precious, please name it.

**On admission/arrival to the children’s wards**

When you get to hospital you need to find the right ward (ask at reception if you are not sure). You will need to press the security intercom to enter any of the children’s wards. Please be patient if we are not able to answer the door immediately.

**Welcome and introduction**

In the ward, someone will show you where your child’s bed is, and then they will show you around.

A nurse will ask you and your child (depending on their age) lots of questions:

- where they go to school
- what they like to eat and drink
- what they like to do during the day
- when they go to bed
- who will be staying with them

This helps us to get to know you and your child so that we can follow your child’s routine and make your stay in hospital as comfortable as possible. Each shift your child will be allocated a ‘named nurse’, who is responsible for your child’s care and will answer any questions.

**Facilities**

Each bed space has a ‘Patientline’ machine which has TV (this is free and goes off at 19:00) radio and a telephone. Phone cards and movie cards can be bought from machines in the concourse.

On normal school days, for children of school age, we have teachers who come to the wards.

Meals are served on the ward to all inpatients, and breastfeeding mothers. A dietitian is available for any special requirements. If your child needs a special diet, it is helpful to let the ward know before admission.

**Observations**

Soon after arrival on the ward, a nurse will want to weigh your child and record their temperature, pulse, breathing and blood pressure. The nurses will always explain what they are doing. Please do ask if you are not sure what is happening.

**Investigations**

Your child may need other investigations specific to their condition. The doctors and nurses will explain this individually but please ask at any time if you do not understand anything or would like to know more.
A play specialist or specialist nurse may be available to help prepare your child for specific procedures. Depending on your child’s level of understanding these may include:

- Photo books
- Adapted dolls and teddies
- Role playing of procedures
- Visits to treatment areas

They may also help your child through relaxation, distraction and play.

For further information contact our therapeutic play manager (extension 6746)

On Discharge

- Please make sure you have a supply of paracetamol and ibuprofen at home for when your child is discharged.
- A nurse will explain to you any aftercare that is required upon discharge.
- Please feel free to contact the ward at any time if you have any worries.

Ward contact details

Ward D2: 01223 217250
Ward C3: 01223 217450
Ward C2: 01223 217231
Ward F3: 01223 217567
Ward PDU: 01223 257157
Ward PICU: 01223 217715

We are now a smoke-free site: smoking will not be allowed anywhere on the hospital site.

For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS stop smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169.

Other formats:

If you would like this information in another language, large print or audio, please ask the department where you are being treated, to contact the patient information team:

patient.info@addenbrookes.nhs.uk.

Please note: We do not currently hold many leaflets in other languages; written translation requests are funded and agreed by the department who has authored the leaflet.

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