Addenbrooke's Hospital School

What happens about school?

Advice for parents or carers of young patients undergoing surgery for scoliosis

This information sheet aims to support you in requesting school support for your child during their absence for surgery.

The planned scoliosis surgery will require a hospital stay of up to a week followed by a period of recovery at home and a gradual phased return to full time school. Obviously this is likely to cause considerable disruption to your child’s schooling.

At your counselling appointment, you will be given a letter for your child’s school explaining how the surgery will affect attendance and what activities will be possible during the recovery period.

So what next?

- Send or give this letter to a named teacher who is involved in your child’s learning at school (Form Tutor, Head of Year, Head of House etc.). If possible, we would recommend that you also ask to meet with this teacher or at least speak to them on the telephone. Ideally, give the school two or three weeks notice of the expected absence.
- Make sure that the letter you sent has been received and that school is fully aware of the length of time your child is expected to be absent. The school will need to make detailed plans to support your child during this time.
- Ask what arrangements will be made to enable your child to keep up with some school-work during the absence. (Bear in mind that your child will not be able to manage everything normally done at school, so it is sensible to focus on the most important subjects). Home tuition is advised for extended absences, and this should be available for your child, although provision varies and is not usually offered beyond yr 11.
- In addition, the school may also send work home. Check: How will work be set? Ask if it will need to be collected from school or can it be emailed to you or your child? What will happen when your child has completed the work? Will it be properly monitored and feedback provided? What happens if your child needs help? Does the school use online learning sites? If so, do you have the log-ins and passwords?
During your child’s hospital stay

During school term time, a team of hospital teachers work on the children’s wards and has responsibility for patients up to the end of school year 13. If your child is on ward D2, we will visit when appropriate after surgery. In most cases, patients are not well enough immediately after their operation to begin any school work but the teacher will visit to check whether there are any concerns about school and if any help or advice is needed. Gentle learning activities or normal teaching will be offered, if appropriate, but in most cases, recovery is followed quite quickly by discharge home.

Older patients still in education (years 12 and 13)

We hope that these guidelines will be helpful in making arrangements to keep up with school or college work after the operation. The hospital teachers may be able to provide post-16 specialist teaching for English, maths and science, staff and time permitting. If you would like some input or have any particular worries about the effect of absence on your course, the hospital teacher will also be able to provide advice or support. Please let your nurse or physiotherapist know so that your request can be passed to the hospital school for a visit to your ward.

Benefits

Scoliosis surgery does entail a considerable period of absence from school. By informing your child’s school clearly about the treatment plan and recovery period you will enable teachers to prepare suitable work or arrange tuition. Your child is entitled to this support and it will help them to return to school confidently, knowing that they have not fallen too far behind.

Contacts/Further information

- Specialist physiotherapist 01223 216410 (Clinic 6)
- Scoliosis coordinator 01223 216854
- Addenbrooke’s Hospital School 01223 586619
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.