

E1 Ocean Ward Information Booklet



Help you prepare for
your child's hospital stay



Preparing your child for hospital

This leaflet has been written to help you prepare your child for coming into hospital.

We know this can be a stressful time and understand that talking about surgery can be difficult, but there is no doubt that some preparation before admission helps most children gain a sense of control through understanding.

As parents/carers it is important that you understand as much as possible about the planned hospital admission otherwise it can be difficult to confidently prepare your child. If you feel you would like to discuss your child's planned treatment and hospital admission you can contact the cardiac liaison team on 023 8079 4659 or leave a message and they will ring you back for a chat.

Preparing your child

It is important to explain to your child why they are coming into hospital in a way that they understand.



Age related guidelines



- **Newborn - 2 yrs.** when your child is very young, concentrate on preparing yourself for the hospital. If parents feel at ease, their child is usually able to sense this and react in the same way.
- **2yrs - 3yrs.** At this age children do not understand time in the same way as older children and adults. The Ward Play Specialists recommend using toys/books to help prepare your child for coming into hospital. Consider telling your child about his/her operation or procedure 1 or 2 days before coming to the hospital.
- **3yrs - 6yrs.** At these ages children are beginning to learn about the days of the week and are developing a sense of time. It is hard for a child to understand why he or she needs an operation or procedure. Your child may worry that he/she has done something wrong. Reassure your child that the hospital stay is about fixing their heart and is never a punishment. Use simple, short explanations. Consider telling your 3 or 4 year old child about an operation or procedure 1 to 2 days before going to hospital and your 5 to 6 year old child 3 to 5 days ahead of time.
- **7yrs - 11yrs.** At this age a child is able to understand the reason for a hospital stay or procedure. In addition children have developed a sense of time. You may want to tell your child about his or her operation or procedure 7 days before going to the hospital. This will give your child plenty of time to ask questions and to talk about any worries he or she may have about coming to the hospital.
- **12yrs - adult years.** At this age it is best to include children/young people in planning for the operation or procedure from the beginning. Encourage your child to ask questions and to talk about his/her worries about the hospital. Most children are struggling for independence from their parents while at the same time seeking their support. You may want to ask your child how you can help him or her through the hospital stay or procedure.



Talking with your child about the hospital



- **Tell your child that he or she will be coming to the hospital** for an operation, test or procedure.
- **Let your child know that you feel the hospital visit, procedure or test is the right thing to do.** Children can usually sense how a parent feels so it is important to stay positive in front of your child as they will pick up on your worries/anxieties.
- **Choose a quiet time to talk.**
- **Use a calm and relaxed tone.**
- **Ask what your child knows or thinks about the hospital.** Start with what seems the most important in your child's mind.
- **Use honest and simple explanations** that fit your child's age and level of understanding. It is also important to mention any scars your child may have after the operation/procedure.
- **Use words and pictures that your child is familiar with** when possible. Books, leaflets and videos are available to borrow from E1 ward.
- **Let your child know in advance** if you know a test or procedure is about to happen, even it is something uncomfortable like a needle. This will give your child a feeling of trust.
- **Try to use words that are neutral** when describing procedures and tests to your child. For example you may say 'the doctor will slide the needle into your hand,' rather than 'stick' or 'poke' a needle into your arm. You might want to tell your child that 'during the operation the doctor will make a small opening in your chest' rather than 'the doctor will cut a hole in your chest'.
- **Try not to make promises you can't keep,** for example do not tell your child that nothing will hurt or there won't be any blood tests. Use words your child may understand instead such as uncomfortable, scratch etc.
- **Tell your child how he or she may feel before, during and after the operation, procedure or test,** for example you may want to explain to your child that he or she will not see, hear or feel anything during the operation as they will be asleep. Avoid the phrase 'put to sleep'.



- **Tell your child about any plans for an overnight stay** at the hospital. Let your child know that you will be able to sleep at the hospital too. Encourage your child to bring his/her favourite toys to the hospital, such as teddies, videos/DVD's, pillow etc.
- **Build your child's confidence by involving them** in organising and packing a few things to help them during their visit.
- **Tell your child that family and friends will be able to visit.**
- **Encourage your child to ask you and the doctors and nurses lots of questions.** If your child is uneasy about asking questions, you can ask for him/her.
- **Ask your child questions to make sure he/she understands what you have said.** It is important to make sure your child understands that he/she is going to hospital to have their heart checked or fixed and that an operation or procedure may be part of that.
- **Let your child know that it is ok to feel many different ways** about coming to the hospital such as curious, worried, angry or frustrated.
- **Listen to your child's feelings, and help him or her talk about them.**
- **Involve siblings in preparation** they may have their own questions and worries about their brother or sister coming into hospital.

Encouraging your child to play with hospital related toys can also be helpful to prepare him/her for coming to hospital. Below are a few suggestions.

Toddlers: Happy land doctors surgery } usually available from
Medical kits Play doh operation kit } toys r us or early
Books Dressing up } learning centre

Pre School: Playmobil operating room, ambulance
Medical kits Playdough operation kit
Drawing pictures Books Dressing up



School Age: Lego city hospital/ambulance
Drawing, painting, collage Dressing up
Dolls Puppets Books
Operation fix it book (available from British Heart Federation or E1 Ocean Ward)

Older Children: Books, leaflets, videos (all available from E1 Ocean Ward)
Operation Board Game Talking to your child

It is also nice to plan something that all the family can do when the admission is over. Talk about the event as a positive when your child's heart is better.

Jo and Becky are the Play Specialists on E1 Ocean Ward.

They can help to prepare your child when you come to the hospital, or arrange a visit to the ward if you feel this would help your child. They can be contacted on the ward number at the back of this booklet.

Below is a list of books, which may be useful in helping to prepare your child for coming into hospital.

Available from bookshops and to borrow from E1 Ward

Topsy and Tim go to Hospital, Jean Adamson, ISBN: 9781904351269

Talking it Through, Hospital, Althea, ISBN: 1899248498
3 yrs+

Miffy in the Hospital, Bruna D, ISBN: 1405209844

Heart Trouble at Hilltop Hospital, Allan N, ISBN: 0099404559
4 yrs+



Tomorrow I Will Feel Better, Debone A, Broere R, ISBN: 0237520443
4 yrs+ **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**

Available from bookshops

Going into Hospital, Althea, ISBN: 085122539X
3 yrs+

Why Am I Going to Hospital?, Ciliotta C and Livingston C, ISBN: 0818405686
6 yrs+

Spots Hospital Visit, Hill E, ISBN: 0434942723

Emergency Mouse, Stone B, ISBN: 086592127X
5 yrs+

The Physiotherapist, Stewart A, ISBN: 0237600722
6 yrs+

Sammy Goes to Hospital, Action For Sick Children, ISBN: 0904076075

How Does Your Heart Work? Curry D, ISBN: 9780516278551

Hear Your Heart, Showers P, Keller H, ISBN: 0064451399

Your Operation: An activity book for children in hospital, Campbell et al,
ISBN: 9781874534013

Useful Websites

www.childrenfirst.nhs.uk

Good website about coming into hospital. Has separate information for different age groups.

www.bhf.org.uk/cbhf Heart specific information

www.teenagehealthfreak.org

www.yheart.net Good information about the heart aimed at teenagers

Contact Details

E1 Ocean Ward
Southampton General Hospital
Tremona road
Southampton
SO16 6YD

Ward Contact Numbers: 023 8079 6470

Liaison Nurses: 023 8079 4659



Joanna Groves
10/08

Designed by Learning Media,
Southampton General Hospital



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an interpreter or a version in

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