

# How can you prepare your child for a hospital visit?

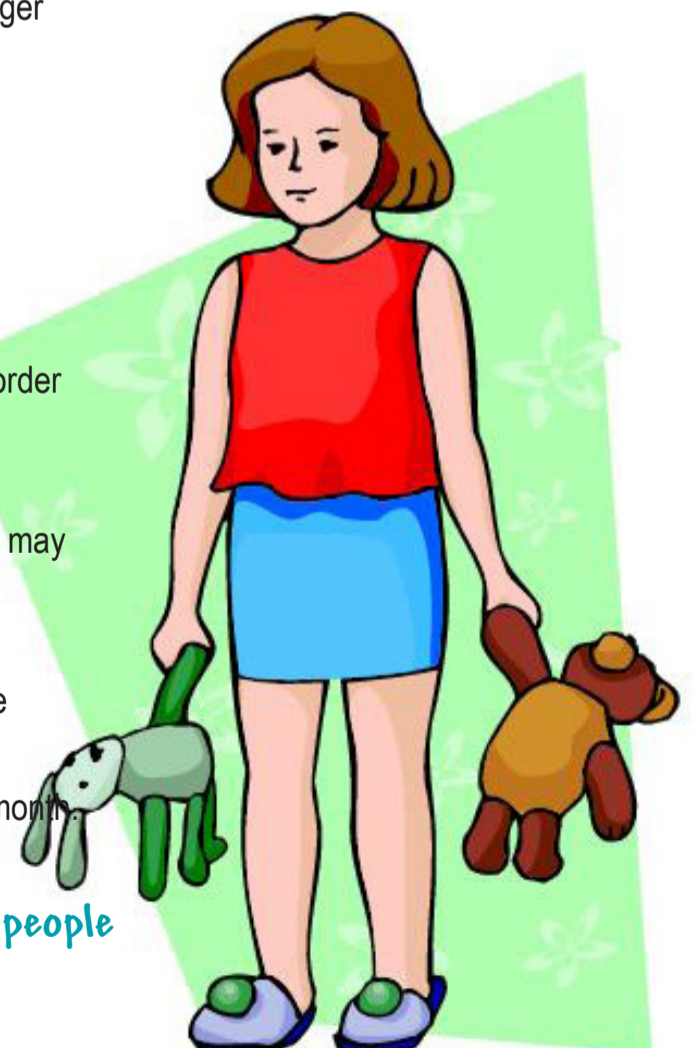
Illness and hospitalisation are stressful experiences for children and their families. There are many things that can influence the extent of negative reactions of children to hospitalisation and medical interventions.

These include:

- previous medical experience
- developmental status of the child
- parent- child interaction
- seriousness of the illness
- severity of the medical procedure
- coping style of the child.

You can minimise the effects of hospitalisation on your child by preparing them in advance

- Talk to your child's doctor and make a list of questions as you think of them
- Ask if the hospital has a special area set aside for children
- Find out everything you can about medical procedures and/or surgery required, hospital procedures and routines
- Take part in a tour of the hospital
- Find out if you can be present during anaesthesia induction and in the recovery room
- Explain to your child that anaesthesia is not exactly like sleep – they will not be disturbed by pain or procedures under anaesthesia
- Prepare brothers and sisters
- Give information to the child a little at a time – older children require more detail – younger children less
- Encourage your child to ask questions and to talk about how they feel
- Encourage play about hospitals with dolls, boxes, pencil and paper and other relevant equipment to help your child express feelings and feel more in control
- Read stories about hospital to your child
- Tell your child it is ok to cry
- Be supportive and encouraging, make positive comments about your child's efforts, in order to build confidence
- Explain each separation from you as it comes up
- Ask the nurses what you can and can't do for your child and where the equipment/linen may be found
- Build up trust – always tell your child when you are leaving and when you will be back
- Allow the child to make decisions in relation to their care as often as possible i.e. simple ones such as which bandaid would you like?
- You will need to prepare in the same way whether the hospital visit is for one day or a month.



If you would like more information on preparing children, young people and their families for hospital please contact AWCH.

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