



This family education sheet suggests ways you can create a more positive experience for your child during an outpatient appointment, evaluation, a surgical procedure or an emergency visit at Boston Children's Hospital.

What should I bring?

Communication systems and devices

Bring your child's communication system or device (for example: Dynavox, picture communication board or iPad/tablet) to the appointment.

- Even if your child can speak, the stress of a hospital visit can make it hard to communicate. Having these devices with you helps to make sure that your child can communicate with their medical team.

Distraction tools

Distraction items can help your child cope with a medical appointment.

- **Bring a favorite toy, sensory item, book or electronic device** (iPad or tablet).
- **Bring a set of headphones.** Headphones may be good for your child to wear if you're going to talk about sensitive topics with the health care provider.

Rewards or reinforcers

Bring items that you often use as rewards for your child in your home. For example, if your child struggles with blood draws, it can be helpful to say, "First blood draw, then a sticker."

Comfort items

If your child has favorite stuffed animal, blanket or object, you can bring it. It may help to make the time at the hospital more comfortable.

How can I prepare my child?

My Hospital Stories

- These are visual tools that give your child a sense of what may happen, what the Boston Children's area may look like and what to expect.
- You can find and personalize a My Hospital Story at childrenshospital.org/patient-resources/you-arrive/your-visit/my-hospital-story

Medication

Please give your child their medication as you normally would unless you're told otherwise by your child's care team.

Patient support plan

- If your child often has a hard time with medical visits, you can **work with our team to develop a patient support plan.** Talk with your child's doctor or call the Autism Spectrum Center at (617) 355-7493 for help making this plan.
- This plan will let our staff know about your child's unique needs and preferences, including help with getting to an appointment, limiting the number of people in the room or providing distraction tools.

Child Life Specialists

- Child Life Specialists use developmentally appropriate strategies and play to help support your child through medical procedures. The Autism Spectrum Center's Child Life Specialists can work with you to plan ahead for your visits, prepare for appointments and provide support on the day of the appointment.
- For more information on how a Child Life Specialist can help your child, contact our Child Life team at (617) 355-8619.

How can I prepare?

- Write down your questions and concerns **before** the visit to share with your child's provider.
- Give yourself more time than you think you need to get to the appointment.
- Ask for help if your child is having a hard time. Many departments or areas at Boston Children's can offer accommodations.
- If possible, bring someone with you for support.

This Family Education Sheet is available in [Spanish](#).