

Family Education Sheet

Going Home after a Hospital Stay or Procedure/Test



Boston Children's Hospital
Until every child is well™

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Going home from the hospital often brings feelings of relief and a sense of returning to "normal life." But even if your child had a short hospital stay, she'll need some time to adjust to being at home.

Your child may need to work through her feelings about the hospital experience. This Family Education Sheet gives ideas on how to help your child adjust.

What can I do when we get home?

- **Plan to spend extra time with your child.** Give her extra affection and attention during the first week at home.
- **Follow your usual household rules.** For example, use the same rules about bedtime, playtime, cleanup and meals.
- **Return to your usual family routines as soon as possible,** such as mealtimes and bedtime.

How long will it take my child to adjust to being home?

- It can take about 1-2 weeks.
- Your child may take longer to adjust if she:
 - Has many tests, procedure and hospital stays
 - Has experienced recent changes in family life, such as a new sibling, a move or a divorce before, during or after the hospital stay
 - Has emotional challenges or is part of a family with social and/or emotional problems

How might my child express her feelings?

Your child may not know how to talk about her feelings. She might express herself in other ways, such as:

- A change in sleeping or eating patterns
- More fears than usual, like nightmares or fear of being left alone by a parent
- More irritability, like frustration over simple tasks and whining
- Clinging to a parent
- Acting as if she were younger, like thumb-sucking or having accidents (not using the toilet)

How might my child express her feelings (continued)?

- Difficulty sharing attention from parents with brothers and sisters
- Aggression, like fighting or arguing with brothers and sisters
- Not following household rules

How can I help my child adjust?

- **Use simple language** to talk with your child about the hospital stay, procedure or test.
- **Play doctor or hospital with your child.** Through play, your child may bring up feelings about her hospital experience.
- **Invite your child to draw pictures.** Ask her to tell you about the pictures.
- **Talk with your child about her dreams or nightmares.** Give her reassurance and positive information about the hospital.
- **Read books together about going to the doctor or the hospital.** For a list of books, see the Family Education Sheet, "[Books to Prepare](#)."

What if my child is having a hard time adjusting?

You can contact Boston Children's Hospital's Coping Clinic. At the clinic, you'll meet with a psychologist or psychiatrist to talk over your concerns, ask questions and learn more about how to help your child. Make an appointment by calling (617) 355-6688.

For more information

To learn more about preparing for the hospital or other health topics, please call:

- The Hale Family Center for Families
(617) 355-6279 or
center.families@childrens.harvard.edu
- Child Life specialists: (617) 355-6551.

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