

# What to Expect in Hospital (For Young People)



If you go into hospital, it's likely your experience will be personal to you and what is needed for your care. However, there are some familiar processes that are useful to know about in advance. Hospital can be an anxiety inducing experience, it's completely normal to feel that way.

**When you Arrive:** Hospitals have a general front desk where you can ask questions if you're not sure where to go. If you've not been to the hospital before, the layout might seem quite confusing.

There are often maps as well as signs and members of staff you can ask for help along the way. Sometimes, hospital letters will give explicit instructions on where you can go too.

When you arrive on the ward, there will often be a reception desk or nurses' bank where you can check in. They will show you where to go and often give you a wrist band that has your personal details on.

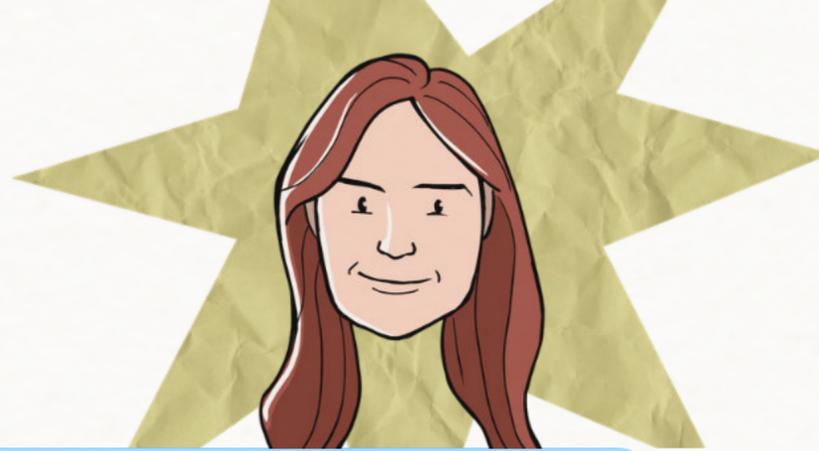
You might find that during your visit, the staff will frequently ask you for your name and date of birth. This isn't because they've forgotten, it's for safety reasons.

**Who you'll Meet:** There are lots of different staff who you will interact with when staying in hospital such as:

- **Doctors/Consultants:** You will have a doctor overseeing your care. Often, these are consultants who are specialists in different areas of medicine. Your doctor will be making decisions on your treatment and will discuss this with you. The doctor will also make a decision on when you are ready to go home.
- **Nurses:** Nurses look after you day to day and implement the treatment plan given by the doctors. This might include administering medicine or taking a blood test.
- **Healthcare Assistants:** Healthcare assistants also help with your care day to day focussing on other tasks. This might include taking your blood pressure or helping to arrange meals.
- **Specialists:** You might also see specialists whilst you're there depending on your treatment. For example, this could include a physiotherapist.
- **Porters:** Porters help patients get around the hospital. This includes taking someone from their bed to the right place for a scan or moving a hospital bed into a room for surgery.

Often, they will wear a uniform or certain colour that lets you know what their role is. Some hospitals have posters for this on their walls or noticeboards. If you're unsure who is who, it's always okay to ask.

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**Where you'll stay:** Where you stay might depend on the hospital and the facilities that they have. It will often depend on your age. You may be on a children's ward or on an adult's ward (with support) if there is no designated teenager/young people's unit.

You might be on a bay in a ward with other people. Or, you may have your own room. If you are on a ward, curtains are around each of the beds so there is more privacy. Where possible, hospitals will talk to you about where you stay and making sure you are comfortable with that.

Some wards also have dayroom and teaching rooms. If you are in hospital for a prolonged stay, you will likely work with the hospital teachers.

On some wards, they also have 'playmakers' or 'youth workers'. There may be specific play rooms that have activities you can take part in such as gaming, music and crafts.

**What to Take:** It might take a little while to put your hospital bag together so make sure you have enough time for this. You'll want to take:

- Comfortable day time clothes as well as pyjamas.
- Toiletries including toothbrush, toothpaste. Some hospitals have shampoo/body wash in their showers but you might still prefer to take your own.
- Things to do - a handheld game console, headphones, a book, drawing materials - etc.
- Chargers
- Make sure you label things clearly with your name on.

**Your Voice Matters:** When you are receiving treatment, it's really important you feel comfortable and understand what is happening and why. You have the right to ask questions, express if you feel uncomfortable and ask for more information.

Before undergoing any investigative procedure or treatment. The healthcare professional should tell you what it is you're having done, why you are having it done and what will happen. Nothing should happen without it being explained to you first.

**Feelings:** Going into hospital at any age can feel like a stressful and scary thing. It's really common to feel this. Some days you might experience a range of feelings such as boredom, confusion, hopefulness and frustration. This is all normal too!

We might not be able to always control how we feel but, we can choose how we deal with them. Tell your parents, guardians and the staff how you are feeling. Some hospitals also have a mental health or youth work team who can support you.

**Leaving Hospital:** For many people, leaving the hospital isn't the end of the journey and there is more that continues at home.

You will only be discharged from hospital when the doctor feels it is safe to do so. They will review you on a regular basis and will want to discharge you as soon as you are well enough.

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On the day that you leave hospital, it might include some waiting around. This is to be expected as the staff will be processing the discharge and preparing any medication and treatment plans you need to take with you.

The ward will give you information on what to do if you feel worse and, any information relating to follow up appointments.

If you have any questions, make sure you ask them. There are no stupid questions and it's really important you share any concerns too.

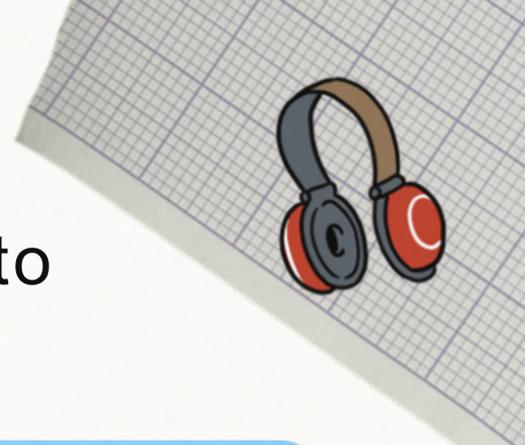
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# What to Expect When your Teen Goes into Hospital (Parents/Guardians)

It's important to remember that this can also be a stressful experience for you too. You might feel vulnerable and helpless in the situation and that's very normal. These are some things you can do for yourself and your young person whilst navigating this experience.



**Before hospital:** Your teen may not be very communicative about how they're feeling about hospital. Asking open questions can be helpful, such as 'Is there anything you're worried about?', 'What can we do to make you feel more comfortable?'.

Lots of hospitals offer simple guides for young people on what to expect. This can include what to bring, where to go and what services they offer (E.G. a day room, youth workers, etc). Some also offer the opportunity to visit in advance to see where they will be. Sharing this with them can help with preparation for both of you.

**Communication:** Where possible, support your young person to make decisions with their treatment. Staff should speak directly to them with you as a support. This will help them to feel more comfortable and empowered.

If you feel this is not happening, you can speak to a member of staff or, let your teenager know why you may have to advocate on their behalf.

There is clear guidance on rights for teenagers when it comes to treatment with a specific distinction between under 16's and 16-17 year olds. If you are unsure - have a look at the hospital's website for more information.

There may also be times that your teen wants to speak to a healthcare professional confidentially. The hospital team will be used to balancing confidentiality with parent involvement. Let them know you're happy to step back if they need some space.

**Staying Over:** Many hospital wards for children and teenagers offer over night stays for parents. This is particularly true if they are a younger teen. There may be a recliner, pull out bed or mattress available for you in their room or bay. Or, there may be a family room or ward nearby available for parents to sleep in.

Wards try and be as flexible as possible with parents when it comes to staying and visiting. You can contact them in advance to find out what their policies are. In certain circumstances they may adapt this depending on the needs of the patient.



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**Facilities:** Some hospitals have other facilities available. This can include a dayroom for family members and access to a parent kitchen where basic meals can be prepared. Most hospitals also have cafes, newsagents and vending machines available too.

**Looking After You:** Taking care of yourself is likely to fall to the bottom of the list whilst your child is in hospital. This is normal, but it is not sustainable, it's really important you look after yourself in whatever way you can during this time.

This might include:

- Asking for help - can friends and family help you with other day to day responsibilities? e.g. picking up other children from school, helping to keep the house tidy, walking the dog.
- Making time to talk- Meet with a friend and talk to them about how you're feeling.
- Giving yourself permission - Feeling exhausted? Guilty for leaving? Scared? Overwhelmed? That's very common and it's okay to feel these things.
- Rest- Rest isn't a luxury it's maintenance and sleep in hospital can be difficult. If you have a trusted adult who can stay with your teen ask them to swap out for a night. For nights in hospital, invest in an eye mask, ear plugs and comfortable pyjamas.
- Take breaks- You'll be taking in a lot of information whilst dealing with everything else. Take a short walk, grab a coffee away from the ward, be outside - even for five minutes. All of these things will help with focus.
- Support groups - Talking to other parents can be a very helpful experience. Ask the hospital staff if they know of any groups that would be relevant to you.

**What your Teen Needs From You:** They don't need you to be perfect or fearless. Just be present, human and honest as you can be. Taking care of yourself is one of the best ways you can maintain this and show up for them.

## Sources:

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