



How to Help...Your Child Prepare for the Hospital

A stay overnight in the hospital can be an overwhelming event for a child of any age. Whether your child is being admitted for a planned stay or has been admitted unexpectedly, a caregiver that is knowledgeable about what to expect during the hospitalization can help ease the child's transition from home to hospital.

Here are some tips to help prepare your child for hospitalization:

- Prepare yourself. Remember children can sense stress in their caregiver.
- Be honest with your child. Let them know why they will be staying in the hospital.
- Use explanations that fit your child's age and level of understanding.
- Let your child know where you will be staying during their hospitalization (for example, will you stay overnight or need to return home?).
- Encourage your child to bring comforting items from home such as a pillow, favorite blanket, stuffed animal or other favorite toy.
- Involve your child in packing for the stay.
- Bring photos of friends, family and pets from home.
- Encourage your child to ask questions and clarify any misunderstandings your child may have.
- Assure your child that you feel the hospitalization is what is in their best interest.
- Utilize children's books to help with explanations about the hospitalization such as "Franklin Goes to the Hospital".
- Encourage continued contact with friends.
- Listen to your child and encourage him/her to express their thoughts and feelings.
- Take pictures of the hospital stay and offer your child a scrapbook to help photo journal the experience.
- Bring a special object from home that symbolizes hope, faith or security.
- If possible, plan a pre-hospitalization tour. Call the UCD Children's Hospital Child Life and Creative Art Therapy Department to arrange a tour prior to admission (916-703-3024).