



How to Help...Your School-Age Child in the Hospital

Children between the ages of 6 and 11 are beginning to develop a sense of independence. They are interested in understanding how things work and why. It is important to help the school-age child to understand what they will experience while in the hospital through their senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch) as that is what is real to them. Socially, they begin to place a greater importance on school peers and friends. Because peer groups are starting to play a larger role, the desire to “fit in” becomes increasingly strong for the school-age child. The school-age child also has a heightened awareness of their surroundings. When possible, advanced preparation for procedures is important for the school-age child. It is always important to discuss medical events and diagnoses with your child so they can understand and be given a chance to ask questions.

Below are some ways to help support your school-age child.

- o For your young school-age child, provide accurate references to time (i.e. after lunch, before dinner).
- o Remind your young school-age child that hospitalization was necessary due to their illness or injury and is in no way a punishment.
- o Include your child in their own care to encourage successful participation and a sense of control.
- o Ask your child to explain their understanding of the hospitalization to clear up any misconceptions.
- o Encourage your child to discuss their concerns and questions with both you and their medical team.
- o Encourage your child to share their worries. Remind your child that it is OK to express their fears and that talking about them can help. Keeping fears bottled up can create anger, withdrawal, or frustration.
- o Remember, at times, your child may act braver than they really feel.
- o Protect your child’s need for modesty and privacy.
- o Encourage your child to maintain connections with friends and school peers as it will help them to feel connected and support their self-esteem.
- o Establish a daily routine that includes periods of uninterrupted sleep.
- o Encourage your child to bring comfort items from home.
- o Help provide your child with reasonable choices to increase feelings of control.