Preparing Your Child for the Hospital

The hospital can be a stressful place for children. Preparing your child ahead of time can help reduce anxiety and the transition from home to hospital.

Some tips to keep in mind:

- Prepare yourself for the hospital stay and try to stay calm. 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 language that fits your child’s age and level of understanding.
- Use children’s books to help your child learn about the hospital.
- Encourage your child to ask questions. This can help clear up any confusion your child may have.
- Listen to your child and encourage them to express their thoughts and feelings.
- Let your child know where you will be staying while they are at the hospital. For example, will you stay overnight, or do you need to go home?
- If the hospital stay is planned, involve your child in packing.

- Bring along comfort items from home, such as a favorite blanket, stuffed animal, or other favorite toy.
- Bring photos of friends, family, and pets from home.
- Encourage contact with friends and family members through phone or video calls.
- Most children’s hospitals have toys, movies, and other activities to provide to your child. Please let staff know if you are interested in these items.

For more information or to connect with a Child Life Specialist, please visit: [http://ucdavis.health/childlife](http://ucdavis.health/childlife)