

## Preparing your Child for a visit to Adelaide Day Surgery

Adelaide Day Surgery is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people accessing our service and the welfare of the children in our care will always be our first priority.

**We support the rights of the child and will act without hesitation to ensure a child safe environment is maintained at all times.**

We recognise that a visit to hospital can be frightening for a person of any age, but especially children.

The following information and suggestions are designed to help you and your child before, during and after a visit to our facility.

Many children are unprepared for the hospital experience. The unfamiliar surroundings of the hospital, the strange faces, complicated equipment, and sometimes painful medical procedures, can be distressing for children. This distress can be reduced if children are prepared for hospital.

We hope the information in this brochure will be helpful however if you have any further queries, please contact us on (08) 8239 4900.



## What to tell your child *before* coming to hospital

Tell your child **honestly and truthfully** why they need to come to hospital. If your child is under six years of age, tell your child a couple of days beforehand. If they are more than six-years-old, tell them a week or two beforehand.

Telling your child before coming into hospital gives them time to prepare by asking questions, and talking about going to hospital with you and others. Use simple words your child will understand.

If you are not sure what to say, or how to answer questions, you can ring the hospital and ask to speak to one of our nurses for advice on (08) 8239 4900.

Be careful about using humour or making 'jokes' about going to hospital with your child. Joking around with adults can 'lighten up' a potentially stressful situation. In children however, humour has not yet developed in the same way, and jokes in this situation can become confusing or frightening.

### Practical tips and ideas



**Read** books together about going to hospital. Your local library, school, kindergarten or child care centre may be able to help.

Be **prepared** for your child to ask the same questions several times. Each time you answer them, they will be absorbing a little more information, as well as getting reassurance from you.

**Plan** what you will take with you to hospital:

a favourite doll, rug, teddy, or other comfort item

a favourite activity, or maybe a new one especially for hospital

Depending on the age of your child, give them plenty of time for 'hospital **play**'. You can get them to do things like bandaging a teddy, listening to family member's heartbeats, practising taking medicine.

Tell your child's school, kindergarten, or childcare centre about the admission to hospital. They will also be able to help prepare your child.

**Reassure** your child that you will be coming and staying with them. Usually, you will be able to stay with your child until they are asleep (have an anaesthetic) before their surgery. You will also be able to be with them in recovery after the operation.



We strongly recommend that you organise to have another adult accompany you for the journey home from hospital to allow one driver and one dedicated carer for your child.

We also recommend that you do not bring other children with you to ensure you are able to give undivided attention to your child who is having surgery.

## During your visit

You are encouraged to stay with your child while he/she goes to sleep. You will then be asked to return to the waiting room. Once their procedure is completed, your child will be taken to the Recovery Room where our nurses will look after your child.

When your child wakes up, he or she is likely to be confused and may cry for a short time.

Once your child has woken and breathing by themselves, you will be able to sit with your child. Please remember that your child may feel dizzy and a bit sick. They may also experience a minor sore throat or hoarse voice. Our nurses will keep a close watch on your child during this time and will welcome any questions you may have.

### How soon can you take your child home?

After very short procedures, children may be ready to go home after half to one hour. For longer procedures most children will be able to go home within 2 hours. This time may vary according to the individual child and their progress of recovery.

### When your child goes home

It is not unusual for a child to show some behaviours that are different to normal when they leave hospital. For example, they might be clingy, attention seeking or have 'babyish' behaviours, (like sucking their thumb) which they have grown out of.

A visit to hospital is a big event in a child's life, even if it is only for a day procedure. Stick to usual routines and give them some time, patience and understanding. Your child will soon return to their normal self.

Siblings may also be clingy, or show attention-seeking behaviours. It has been different for them too, so allow time for their questions and try to also involve them in events.

Again, allow your child plenty of time to 'play' about being in hospital. They have more information and experience now, and need to play out these experiences to make sense of, and cope with them.

### Nausea and vomiting

Do not worry if your child feels sick or vomits once or twice after leaving hospital.

If they vomit or feel sick, stop giving food for about one hour. Then try a light diet if your child can manage without feeling ill.

If your child keeps vomiting, please call your child's surgeon or your nearest emergency department.

### Wound care

If your child has a dressing leave it in place until the review appointment, or take it off as told by your child's surgeon.

### Activity

Because your child has had an anaesthetic, they should rest for the next 24 hours with an adult taking care of them.

### Pain relief

Paracetamol can be given at home every four to six hours for one to two days if needed. Read the bottle for the correct dose for your child according to their age. Ask for help if you are unsure.

For more severe pain call your child's surgeon or see your family doctor.

**Do not give any medicine with paracetamol in it more than six times in 24 hours.**

If you are concerned or unsure about care at home, please contact your child's surgeon.

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## Key points to remember



Be honest about telling your child why they need to come to hospital.

Involve them in the preparations for hospital. For example help them with packing their bag.

Allow plenty of time for play and questions about coming to hospital.

Talk to your child's school, kindergarten, or child care centre because they can help you too.

Allow plenty of time for readjustment when your child returns home again.

**NEVER** threaten your child with a return to hospital, such as a punishment for behaviours you do not like.

**For more information, please visit:**

<http://www.awch.org.au/pdfs/Library-Brochures/May11-Going-to-Hospital-Dentist.pdf>