



# Young People in Hospital



Helping sick children and young people meet their healthcare needs,  
in partnership with parents, carers and professionals


Welcome to our guide for young people in hospital. We hope you'll find it useful, and whether this is your first visit, or you've been in hospital before, it is specially designed to help make your stay in hospital as good as possible. You may also like to read our guide ***What to expect when a child goes to hospital*** for those looking after younger children because it also has information which could be helpful for you.

Action for Sick Children Scotland (ASC(S)) has been working in Scotland for over 30 years on behalf of all children, young people and their families to promote and campaign for the best standards of healthcare at times of illness. We act as a bridge between health services and patients and their families.

We work with children, young people and their families by giving healthcare information and support. We can also help you have your say about your health needs and rights.

ASC(S) is a member of the European Association for Children in Hospital (EACH) which has produced the EACH Charter, visit [www.each-for-sick-children.org](http://www.each-for-sick-children.org). This sets out 10 standards for children and young people's health care at times of illness. Hospitals are working towards meeting these standards.

If you would like to know more, or need support from Action for Sick Children (Scotland) you can contact us by:

 0131 553 6553

 [enquiries@ascscotland.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@ascscotland.org.uk)

 [www.ascscotland.org.uk](http://www.ascscotland.org.uk)

# Going into Hospital



## Why do I have to go in and do I have to stay?

Going into hospital can feel like a trip into the unknown. This guide will give you an idea of what to expect, who will be looking after you and what will happen.

If you are going in because you need treatment, tests or an operation, you only stay in hospital for as long as is absolutely necessary.

Day surgery and day care mean you can go to hospital in the morning, have your treatment, and go home the same day. Even after major surgery you can be discharged after just a few days. With the help of parents and carers, and sometimes a community nursing team, young people can self-manage their care at home. Some even give themselves daily injections and blood tests.





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You will probably have lots of questions, it's a good idea to write them down so that you can ask your doctor or nurse.

You can also ask someone else to write down what they say if you just want to focus on listening.

Remember if they say something you don't understand, you can ask them to explain it again – they won't mind.

For more information on speaking to doctors go to:



[www.childrenfirst.nhs.uk/teens/hospital/expect/medical.html](http://www.childrenfirst.nhs.uk/teens/hospital/expect/medical.html)



[www.gosh.nhs.uk/gosh\\_families/information\\_sheets/young\\_people.html](http://www.gosh.nhs.uk/gosh_families/information_sheets/young_people.html)

## Where will I stay?

Not all hospitals have wards specially for young people. Some stay in children's wards, some in adult wards and a few in adolescent wards or young people's units. Talk to your GP or consultant about your choices at the hospital you'll be going to, before you go in.

Even if you are on a ward with younger children, staff are experienced in working with young people, and there are often lots of activities to keep you busy. Ask what services they have as there may be rooms or bays set aside and sometimes there are Young People's Units for teenagers. You may find you are expected to share with young people of different ages and sex. If this is a problem ask staff if they can help you.

Even if you are not in a children's hospital or a Young People's Unit, your rights are still looked after.

## Who will be looking after me?

Each day there is a nurse who is in charge of your nursing care. They will also answer your questions, and find out what is going on if you don't understand what staff tell you or what they are doing. When **your** nurse finishes their shift, they will introduce you to the person taking over until they return, so you always have a point of contact. Your parent or carer can also help you if they are with you.

It can seem as if there are a lot of people looking after you so some wards have photo boards showing who everyone is on the ward. Just ask if you are not sure.

To see a photo board of healthcare staff visit:



[www.childrenfirst.nhs.uk/teens/hospital/whos\\_who/index.html](http://www.childrenfirst.nhs.uk/teens/hospital/whos_who/index.html)

All staff should wear a badge telling you who they are and what they do.

*I wish the doctors and nurses would listen to me. Can I stop them rushing me into having things done, before I realise what's happening?*



# A Day in the Life of You!

*Can I go to the hospital shop and canteen in my wheelchair?*

## Things to do

If you are new to hospitals, the nurses and sometimes other patients will tell you what's going on and most hospitals have free booklets telling you about their services. Just ask your nurse for one.

As well as your treatment during the day, there's lots to do. Many wards have computers and DVDs, videos, board games, arts and craft materials and snooker. There are books and magazines as well and you can chat to the other young people and children. Music and art sessions are sometimes arranged, and if you are in for more than a few days, school lessons will be arranged for you. Have a look at the **Education** section on p. 6





## What about rest and free time?

It is a good idea whatever ward you are in to bring or ask for headphones for the television and/or radio, and bring in your personal CD player or iPod etc. That way you are not disturbed and you won't disturb others.

A young person's routine is different from younger children and adults so you might want to talk to staff about how they can work with you. They may be able to be quite flexible.

## Food glorious food – no, not cold jelly and custard!


You do not need to worry about what to eat when you are in hospital. There is lots of choice and you can get a snack if you are hungry in between meals.

Meal times can seem a bit different to what you are used to. Breakfast is usually around 8am, lunch about midday and dinner around 5pm. For lunch

*Can I get my Mum to bring in food for me?*

and dinner there are several main meals, snacks, salads or sandwiches. There will be a choice of pudding as well as fruit, yoghurt and ice-cream. Each day you will get a menu and can choose for the next day.

In some units, there are kitchen areas for you to prepare food and drink or ask as you may be able to make snacks in the ward kitchen – cereals, toast, pizzas.



Your family can request food, like halal or kosher if you need this. Remember to be careful about offering food to other people on your ward – they may be about to have an operation or are on a special diet, in which case they shouldn't have anything.

In some wards, you may not be able to have hot drinks at the bedside. So check first with the nurses.

## Education

Coming into hospital doesn't mean missing out on school work. You have **a right** to education in hospital so ask about this as soon as you feel well enough to study.

Look at EACH Charter Point 7:



[www.each-for-sick-children.org](http://www.each-for-sick-children.org)

Many hospitals have teachers working on the wards and some have their own school room, with the latest technology to help you keep up with school work and in touch with your friends at home. If you can't get to the school room, the teacher can come to your bedside. If you know you are going into hospital you may want to talk to your teachers about this and plan any work you can do while you are absent. Ask the hospital to keep in touch with your own school so that you don't miss out on anything.



*Does the bathroom have a proper lock on the door?  
Can I have a bath in private?*

## **My space**

There will be times when you want some privacy to phone or text a friend, to talk to your parent or carer, do your school work, or study for exams. You might want the doctor to fully close the curtains round your bed when they come and see you. Hospitals all have different arrangements, so ask the nurse in charge of your care to help you.

*My Mum/carers lives too far away to see me often, how can I keep in touch with her?*

## **Keeping in touch – visitors and mobiles**

Most children's/young people's wards have 'open' visiting for family. This means that within reason they can visit any time. There should also be somewhere for your parent or carer to stay overnight if you want this.

On an adult ward, visiting hours may be shorter and your parent/carers may not be able to stay overnight. There may be an exception to this for example young people with complex needs. So always ask.

Friends can visit but some wards are quite small so this may limit the number of visitors. Ask about the use of your mobile.



# Having Your Say

## Do I have a say in what happens?

Yes, you do. For a full explanation of what this means for you please look at the Health Rights Information Scotland (HRIS) booklets *Consent* and *Confidentiality* for Under-16s.

Visit:  [www.hris.org.uk](http://www.hris.org.uk)

## What is 'consent'?

EACH Charter Point 5 says children, young people and their parents and carers have the right to informed participation in all decisions involving their healthcare.

You have a right to have a say in all decisions about your healthcare and decide if you have treatment. You may find it helpful to discuss this with your parents/carers, medical staff or an independent person called an advocate.



## How can I decide what's best for me?

Most young people are happy to consent to treatment they know will make them better once they feel they have been given the right information in a way they can understand.

Here are some questions to help you make decisions:

*Can I choose to have a different treatment, or no treatment?*

*How long will it take?*

*How might the treatment help this?*

*What are the risks?*

*What is my problem?*

*What will the treatment involve – what will happen to me?*

*Will it be better for me to have this treatment or not?*

*If the treatment is urgent, can I have time to think about it?*

*If I don't want the treatment, can it be delayed in case I change my mind?*



This is where an **independent advocate** can help. This is a person who:

- ▶ is only there for you
- ▶ can help you work out what you want to say
- ▶ can help you get your point of view across
- ▶ can speak for you if you want

Your hospital or carers can help you find out about advocacy services.

**What if I'm asked to take part in medical research or help with teaching student doctors and nurses?**

Research is needed to improve healthcare even more and most people are happy to help but again this is your choice.

So take time to think about it and discuss with your carers and medical staff.

Anyone who asks you questions or examines you in hospital should introduce themselves and ask your consent to what they want to do. You have the right to refuse to have extra people present when your doctor or nurse is seeing you.

*I'm 14 and I don't want my foster mum/carers to know everything about my treatment, can I get my doctor to check with me first before he talks to them?*





# Operations

## Preparing for surgery and anaesthetics

It is always good to be prepared and you may have lots of questions about this part of your treatment. Rather than give you too much information, here are some links to leaflets which tell you everything you need to know.

You can find out more about having an anaesthetic by visiting the information for patients and relatives page on the Royal College of Anaesthetists website:



[www.rcoa.ac.uk/index.asp?PageID=69](http://www.rcoa.ac.uk/index.asp?PageID=69)

Some hospitals in Scotland have their own leaflets for young people, parents and carers about preparing for surgery and anaesthesia.

You can ask at your pre-admission clinic or when you get to hospital.

Parents/carers should be able to accompany you into the anaesthetic or recovery room unless there is a very good reason not to. Young people should be given the choice about this through discussion. Your views should be taken over someone else's unless there is real reason not to.

Check in advance what your hospital's policy is by talking to the nursing staff and the anaesthetist or ask about this at your pre-admission clinic.

You can also ask about pain control **before** your operation so that you don't need to worry about it being sore afterwards. Always tell your nurse if you are in pain.

# Young People's Health Rights and Charters



These websites give you information about your rights

**EACH** – visit [www.each-for-sick-children.org](http://www.each-for-sick-children.org)

We also have a **Young People's EACH Charter** as a mini booklet.

To see a copy, visit our website.

**General Medical Council**

[www.gmc-uk.org/about/index.asp](http://www.gmc-uk.org/about/index.asp)

[www.gmc-uk.org/static/documents/content/gmc\\_0-18\\_years\\_2007.pdf](http://www.gmc-uk.org/static/documents/content/gmc_0-18_years_2007.pdf)

**United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**

[www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/strategy/strategyandgovernance/uncrc/unitednationsarticles/uncrcarticles/](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/strategy/strategyandgovernance/uncrc/unitednationsarticles/uncrcarticles/)

# Other Useful Places

**ACT** has a helpline for support for children and young people with life-threatening or life-limiting illnesses. ☎ 0845 108 2201 🌐 [www.act.org.uk](http://www.act.org.uk)

**ChildLine** is a national free telephone helpline for children and young people to talk about any problems or worries they have. ☎ 0800 11 11

**Children First for Health** is the online guide to children's health for young people run by Great Ormond Street Hospital, London.

🌐 [www.childrenfirst.nhs.uk/teens/index.html](http://www.childrenfirst.nhs.uk/teens/index.html)

🌐 [www.teenagehealthfreak.org/homepage/index.asp](http://www.teenagehealthfreak.org/homepage/index.asp)

**Contact a Family** offers links to support groups for specific conditions through it's freephone helpline ☎ 0808 808 3555 🌐 [www.cafamily.org.uk](http://www.cafamily.org.uk)

**Enable Scotland** supports children, young people and adults with learning disabilities and their families to exercise their rights. ☎ 0141 226 4541

🌐 [www.enable.org.uk/about.php](http://www.enable.org.uk/about.php) and [www.bebo.com/speak4yourself](http://www.bebo.com/speak4yourself)

**Health Information and Self Care Advice for Scotland**

NHS24 Helpline ☎ 0800 22 44 88 🌐 [www.nhs24.com](http://www.nhs24.com)

**Health Rights Information Scotland** information about what you can expect from the NHS, accessing your health records, and being involved in decisions about your health care. ☎ 0141 226 5261 Leaflets for young people under 16, explaining your healthcare rights on: Confidentiality – your rights; Consent – it's your decision; Have your say! – your right to be heard 🌐 [www.hris.org.uk](http://www.hris.org.uk)

**Scottish Child Law Centre** helps children young people, their families and carers, by providing expert advice. For information ☎ 0131 667 6333 Freephone number ☎ 0800 328 8970 (for people under 18)

🌐 [www.sclc.org.uk/kzhome.htm](http://www.sclc.org.uk/kzhome.htm)

**Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People** ☎ 0131 558 3733 Freephone number for young people ☎ 0800 019 1179 🌐 [www.sccyp.org.uk](http://www.sccyp.org.uk)

**Special Needs information Point (SNIP)** is a voluntary organisation based at the Royal Hospital for Sick Children in Edinburgh providing advocacy, advice and information on services. ☎ 0131 536 0583 🌐 [www.snipinfo.org](http://www.snipinfo.org)

**Who Cares? Scotland** work with and for young people in care.

☎ 0141 400 6363 🌐 [www.whocarescotland.org](http://www.whocarescotland.org)

Action for Sick Children (Scotland) is the only charity in Scotland dedicated to informing, promoting and campaigning on behalf of the needs of ALL sick children and young people within our healthcare system.

For information in your language phone 0131 553 6553

للحصول على معلومات بلغتك التي تتحدث بها، الرجاء الإتصال على هاتف رقم:  
0131 553 6553

اپنی زبان میں معلومات حاصل کرنے کیلئے فون 0131 553 6553 پر رابطہ کیجئے۔

अपनी भाषा में जानकारी लेने के लिए फोन करें 0131 553 6553

ਆਪਣੀ ਜ਼ਬਾਨ ਵਿਚ ਹੋਰ ਜ਼ਿਆਦਾ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਲੈਣ ਲਈ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ 0131 553 6553

欲想索取閣下所操之語文資料，請致電 0131 553 6553。

Aby uzyskać informacje w Waszym języku, prosimy o kontakt pod numerem telefonu 01315536553.

We would like to thank all the young people and adults who gave us their ideas, suggestions and time to write this guide.

For a full list of our publications please visit [www.ascscotland.org.uk](http://www.ascscotland.org.uk)

For all other information please contact:



**Action for Sick Children (Scotland)**

22 Laurie Street, Edinburgh EH6 7AB

Tel: 0131 553 6553

Website: [www.ascscotland.org.uk](http://www.ascscotland.org.uk)

Email: [enquiries@ascscotland.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@ascscotland.org.uk)

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