



Tips to Help: What Can I Do to Meet My Child's Needs?

- Recognize that illness and hospitalization affects the whole family in different ways.
- Remember that honest and ongoing communication helps children understand the events or situation affecting their family.
- Reassure siblings that they most likely will not also become sick or injured.
- Continue daily routines as much as possible. Children do better keeping their usual schedules and rules for home, school, and other activities.
- Arrange for alone time with the sibling while a trusted person remains with the hospitalized child.
- If there will be changes in the child's daily routine, make sure they are prepared ahead of time to avoid surprises.
- Encourage visits to the hospital, asking questions, and expression of feelings regarding their sibling's hospitalization.
- Encourage the sibling to interact with the hospitalized child through activities, conversation, etc.
- Provide children with honest and accurate health care information, if interested, to avoid misconceptions regarding their sibling's diagnosis.
- Preparation prior to a hospital visit is helpful and clarifies potential misunderstandings. Children benefit best from simple concrete explanations and descriptions that enlist the five senses.

School and Community Support:

- If you are unable to be at home with the patient's siblings during the hospitalization, enlist a familiar caregiver such as a grandparent, aunt, neighbor, etc. to assist in providing care.
- Choose someone at your children's school, like a teacher, counselor, or coach, to help support them during this time.
- Let others help your family by running errands, making meals, or driving carpools. This may allow you more free time to spend with all of your children.



Tips to Help: Activities to Help Siblings Feel Included

- Choose photographs of family, friends, favorite trips and familiar objects to bring to the hospital to decorate their brother or sister's room.
- Create artwork for their brother or sister's hospital room.
- Help pick their brother or sister's favorite things to send to the hospital, such as stuffed animals, clothes, movies or pictures.
- Write letters and cards to keep their brother and sister informed about news at home or at school.
- Design a door sign with their brother or sister's name and messages for visitors. This may include information for staff about the child, such as favorite toys, nicknames, favorite TV shows, etc.
- Record favorite songs, stories, jokes and greetings to send to the hospital. Voices of familiar people can be comforting.
- Put together care packages to send to the hospital. They can include notes, drawings, gifts or pictures from home.
- Invite siblings to visit as often as the sibling desires.
- Play games or work on art projects with the patient if he/she is feeling well.
- Encourage the sibling to read a book, sing a song, or talk about their day to the child.
- Introduce siblings to familiar people in the hospital who are involved in their brother or sister's care.
- Create and update a care page or Facebook page to provide information to family and friend's regarding their sibling's condition.
- Video message, text message, talk on the phone, email, journal back and forth, send mail

Communicating With Your Child

- Provide the child with honest updates on their sibling's health status frequently.
- Encourage them to ask questions and express their feelings about their brother or sister being in the hospital.
- Discuss their concerns about visiting the hospital.
- Acknowledge and validate their feelings regarding their sibling's hospitalization.
- Stay in frequent contact with siblings through phone calls, video messaging, emails and text messages.



How Might My Child React to a Sibling's Hospitalization?

Infants (0-12 months)

- Primary caregiver absence may leave the child feeling scared and unsafe.
- Infants 6-12 months may exhibit separation anxiety from caregivers. Your child may become upset when a primary caregiver leaves.
- When visiting a sibling in the hospital, an infant may become scared by new equipment, people, and noises.

Toddlers (1-3 years)

- Separation anxiety from primary caregivers may be exhibited in the form of protesting, crying, or screaming during separation.
- Stranger anxiety is seen in children this age. Your child may become upset around new or unfamiliar people. You may see crying, whining, or clinging to a primary caregiver. Toddlers may begin to regress (ex: wetting the bed, speaking less, or throwing more frequent tantrums).

Preschoolers (3-5 years)

- Your child may have misunderstandings about why their sibling is in the hospital and what their sibling is experiencing at the hospital.
- Your child may be fearful of becoming sick or "catching" their sibling's illness.
- Your child may exhibit jealousy due to the increased attention focused on the ill sibling.

School-Age (6-12 years)

- Your child may have misunderstandings regarding their sibling's hospitalization and treatment.
- Your child may feel guilty that he/she may have caused or could have prevented their sibling's illness.
- School-aged children may begin to fear that their sibling may never get well and come home.
- Your child may feel left out or forgotten due to the increased amount of time spent with the hospitalized child.

Adolescents (13-18 years)

- Adolescents may begin to fear consequences of their sibling's illness such as death or disability.
- Your child may display anger or resentment towards the ill sibling and their hospitalization.
- Adolescents may display increased engagement in risk taking behaviors and may act out at school or home.