

How to make your child's hospital stay safer, less stressful

July 18 2019, by Len Canter



More than 3 million kids are hospitalized in the United States every year.

Whether it's for a planned test or surgery or an injury or other emergency, knowing how to be involved in your child's care can help you get through what's often a stressful event.

The single most important thing you can do is be an active member of your child's health care team, taking part in every decision, according to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. Learn as much as you can about your child's condition and needed tests and treatments from the [medical staff](#) and other reliable sources. Ask if the doctor's recommendations are based on the latest scientific evidence.

Get to know all the members of the care team, especially the lead physician, and make sure each has all of your child's important [health](#) information—from allergies to what vitamins and prescription drugs, if any, he or she takes.

If you have a choice, use a hospital with a lot of experience in the procedure or [surgery](#) your child needs—research shows that this leads to better results.

While your child is in the hospital, don't be afraid to speak up if you see something out of the norm or even if [health care workers](#) neglect to wash their hands, an important way to prevent the spread of infections.

Ask why each test or procedure is being done, how it can help and when results will be available so that you're not stressed over how long it's taking. If your child is having surgery, make sure that you, your child's doctor and the surgeon all agree and are clear on exactly what will be done. On the other hand, be prepared to answer the same questions over and over—it may seem tedious but it helps prevent mistakes.

Before your child goes home, ask the team to go over his or her care plan, including any needed medication and/or restrictions on their

activities. Speak up if you have any questions. Take notes or ask a loved one to do it for you.

More information: The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has more tips on [preventing hospital errors](#) to help parents safeguard their children.

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