

MY VISIT TO HOSPITAL

Information for parents/carers

About the social script

The social script uses the term 'my adult.' This refers to the parent or adult carer who will be with the child during their hospital stay. Feel free to change this wording to suit your needs. Also, for some parts of the surgery process only one adult can be with the child during surgery and recovery. Please take this into account when changing the terms of the script.

The hospital offer tours of the paediatric ward and the operating theatre. This is a great way for you and your child to familiarise yourself with the process. The child will receive a practice oxygen mask to practice with their toy and on themselves in preparation for admission. Paediatric oxygen masks are strawberry flavoured, so you may want to practice with your child so they can familiarise themselves with the mask.

Don't forget to bring your special toy too!

It is important to speak to your child about what is going to happen at hospital. Particularly, as they can experience pain and discomfort, so they know what to expect and thus make the process easier for them. It also helps medical staff if there are fewer surprises during the stay.

There will be steps in this social script that may not be relevant to your child. Feel free to remove pages or text that doesn't apply to your child. If editing the story, please be aware that there is no photography allowed in the hospital. We must respect patients' privacy.

Information to help you and your child planning a hospital stay

School holidays are busier times for elective surgery. You may prefer to plan your child's elective surgery during term time to avoid longer queues, and for a quieter paediatric ward. The hospital staff at St Vincent's Private can give you some advice about this.

Please bring along your child's regular pain relief, particularly if they prefer a particular flavor/brand. If you have any 'tricks' that assist with administration of medicine, please speak to the nurses and they will inform the hospital pharmacist.

Children are allowed to eat food from outside of the hospital. **The hospital is a nut free zone.** If your child is a selective eater, please speak to the nurses about this and they will see what they can assist with. Specific items like bread or ice creams/juices can be stored.

If your child is undergoing ENT surgery, it is important for their recovery to eat before discharge. It is also helpful with healing. Any strategies that you use at home with eating, please advise the nurses e.g. preferred sippy cups/ particular themed or familiar plates (Thomas the Tank Engine plate or Dora the Explorer cup).

If your child has a special toy, like a teddy, superhero figurine or doll, they can be admitted to hospital too. They can get the same needles/bandages as your child and this can help your child to understand the medical procedures taking place during the stay.

You may need to explain what fasting means to your child. Fasting means not eating or drinking for the time that the doctor has told you. There is a café at the main entrance to the hospital, which may appear inviting. If your child is struggling with fasting, you may want to say that this café is for visitors and people who work at the hospital only. It may be good to be prepared with distractions.



At the hospital

Please be aware that admission time is not the time of surgery. Your child may be waiting a number of hours for surgery. Please bring along devices, toys and books that will help pass the time. Your child doesn't have to stay in bed; they can get up and move around.

Nurses work 8 hour shifts. During your child's stay, your child may have up to 5 nurses if they are admitted for an overnight stay. When the shifts change, your new nurse will come and meet you. They will write their name on the care board in your child's room. If you press the green 'call' button located in your child's room, your designated nurse will try to respond if they are free. If not, another nurse will attend upon your child.

When your child is admitted to the ward, they will be given a plastic wrist band with their name on it. This wrist band will either be white, or if your child has allergies, it will be red. If your child has difficulty wearing wrist bands, this may be something that you may need to practice before being admitted to hospital.

Throughout your child's stay, their blood pressure will be monitored regularly. Children under the age of 8 will have the 'peg', which is a peg like device that is fitted onto your child's finger (or toe if necessary). Children over the age of 8 will have a blood pressure cuff.

There are lockers in each room. Children can bring toys, books and other items that will keep them occupied during their stay. If you are bringing electronics or other valuables, parents must look after them while your child is in surgery.

If your child has a special interest, such as a football team or a movie, let the doctors and nurses know. This helps with rapport but also can be a helpful when in theatre. For example, some operating theatres have TV screens and doctors can stream videos, or put up a picture on the wall for your child to look at.

During surgery, your child can remain in their comfy clothes, especially for children with particular clothing preferences for sensory processing reasons. They can stay in their favourite clothes or pyjamas – even throughout the surgery, as children do not have to wear a hospital gown.

One parent can go with the child to surgery. You will need to wear a white hospital gown, a blue hat and blue slippers. In surgery, you can stay with your child until they go to sleep - you can hold their hand/comfort them. A nurse will walk you out and back to the paediatric ward. Once your child has woken up, you will be called to come down to the recovery ward. Only one parent can be with the child during this period.

There is free WIFI at the hospital.

Sensory considerations

Hospitals are big and busy places. There are many sensory experiences which may be new for your child, and at times overwhelming. Attending a hospital tour beforehand can help your child become familiar with these new sensations. It can also give you some ideas about the types of preparations that you may need to make, or some strategies. Remember to speak to your therapists about this. They may have some ideas that can help make your child's stay in hospital more pleasant.

St Vincent's Private Hospital has the following:

- There are light dimmers and block out blinds in the rooms
- There are carpets in the room
- Speak to nurses about your child's dietary requirements, and bring along any foods or drinks which you know your child will eat
- Children don't have to remain in bed the entire time. They can walk with supervision There is a play room and pictures around the ward which may interest your child
- If your child is sound sensitive, noise cancelling headphones may be useful. Remember, there will be other people in the ward, who can make noises
- Bring sensory toys or activities that assist your child to self-regulate
- The oxygen mask used in surgery smells of strawberry. Let the nurse know, sometimes they use different flavoured lip glosses to cover the odour.
- Hospitals have lots of different odours, particularly disinfectants.

We would like to thank Amaze for their assistance in developing this booklet for our patients.



Amaze is the peak body for people on the autism spectrum and their supporters in Victoria.

We want every person on the autism spectrum to have the opportunity to exercise their own choice to participate meaningfully in, and make a valued contribution to, our society.

We build awareness and understanding of autism.

We develop community capacity by working with others to help them value and support people on the autism spectrum and their families.

For more information visit amaze.org.au

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Developed in consultation with our patients



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UNDER THE STEWARDSHIP OF MARY AIKENHEAD MINISTRIES

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