

Safety Tips for When Your Child is in the Hospital

Safety Tips for When Your Child is in the Hospital

- It is common to have questions when your child is admitted to the hospital. These tips can help to keep you and your family safe during your child's stay.
- You know your child best. Nova Scotia Health supports family presence and family-led care. This means that parents, family members, guardians, and designated persons are welcomed as important members of the health care team, and as full partners in care.
- A parent, guardian, or designated person must stay with your child while they are in the hospital. This is for their safety and comfort. We encourage you to ask about and be actively involved in your child's care. We will work with you to make sure your child's visit is as safe as possible.
- Nova Scotia Health supports breastfeeding or chestfeeding anytime and anywhere. This is a protected right in Nova Scotia. If you want or need more privacy, tell a member of your child's health care team.

It is important to ASK.

Ask:

- › us to introduce ourselves.
- › staff, family, and visitors to wash their hands when entering or leaving your child's room.
- › us to check your child's hospital identification (ID) band. If your child does not have an ID band, ask us for one. **It is important that your child wears a hospital ID band at all times during their stay.**
- › us to explain or repeat anything you are not sure about.
- › who to contact to get test results (like blood work).
- › questions about any part of your child's care (like their diagnosis and treatment plan).
- › us if you think something is wrong. Trust your gut.
- › about your child's medication during your visit and before you go home. Make sure you understand how and when to give it, and any possible side effects. Make sure a member of your child's health care team explains any changes to your child's medication (like how much to take or when to take it).

It is important to TELL.

Tell:

- › us what medications (prescription, over-the-counter, or herbal) your child takes. Bring all of your child's medications with you to the hospital. If you cannot do this, write down the names of your child's medications and how they are taken, or take pictures of each medication label.
- › us about any allergies your child has. **It is very important to tell us if your child has an allergy to any medications, foods, the environment, or latex (rubber balloons are not allowed in the hospital because of latex allergies).** If your child has allergies, make sure that they get a **red ID band** when they are admitted.
- › us if your child has been in the hospital or had surgery before.
- › us what you see and think, and any changes you see in your child. You know your child best.
- › staff right away if you are curious or concerned about people entering your child's room or asking about your child, even if they are wearing a hospital uniform or an ID badge.
- › us if you have to leave your child alone.

It is important to KNOW.

Scent-free environment

- Nova Scotia Health is scent-free. We ask that you, your family, and your visitors **do not** use any scented products. This includes perfume, cologne, aftershave, hygiene products, essential oils, and scented soaps or detergents.

Finding your way around the hospital

- If you need help finding your way around the hospital, ask a staff member on the unit, at the information desk, or at the security desk. There are also signs on the walls.

Staff ID

- All hospital staff wear a clearly visible photo ID badge. You have the right to ask your child's health care providers to show their photo ID. **Never let your child go anywhere with someone who does not have a photo ID badge.** You are welcome to go with your child any time they must leave their room for tests or procedures.
- Patients under 16 years of age are not allowed to leave the unit or go out on an approved leave or pass unless they are with their parent, guardian, or designated person. If you are taking your child off the unit, tell the nursing staff.

Privacy and confidentiality

- To protect the privacy of others, ask for permission before:
 - › taking pictures or videos of other patients or visitors.
 - › posting information about staff, patients, or families on social networks (like Facebook, or Instagram).
 - › sharing personal details about your visit.
- Family members may take pictures or videos if:
 - › they do not interfere with other patient's treatments.
 - › the pictures or videos do **not** include other people.

Security concerns

If you have a security concern, ask a member of your child's health care team or security staff for help.

Safety tips to protect your child from:

Going missing

- Every hospital has procedures, and some units have equipment to keep your child safe.
- It is important to be aware of security procedures, and to know what to do to help prevent child abduction.

Entrapment (getting trapped or stuck)

- Use a seat belt with all seating equipment (like wheelchairs, swings, strollers, high chairs), as young children can trap their head or another body part in this equipment.
- Place children in the right bed for their size.
 - › Make sure the mattress fits tightly in the cribs and beds. There should not be any extra space between the rails and the mattress.
 - › Keep your child's hospital bed in the lowest position with the brakes on.

Getting tangled in tubing, intravenous (I.V.) lines, and cords

- A nurse will assess your child's risk of getting tangled in these lines when they are admitted. Your child's health care team will keep checking for this throughout your child's stay.

- It is important to tell a member of your child's health care team if you will not be in the room with your child, or if you have seen your child tangled in any tubing or I.V. lines.
- To keep your child from getting tangled:
 - › Take away items that are not needed from your child's bed.
 - › Keep the bed at the right height so your child cannot reach any cords.
 - › Use bandages or clothing to keep tubes in place.
 - › Make sure oxygen tubing is placed firmly under your child's chin, **not** behind their neck.
 - › **Never put anything (like a necklace or a soother) around your child's neck.**

Falls

- Nova Scotia Health uses the Humpty Dumpty Falls Prevention Program™ to assess and identify children at risk for falls.
- Some medications can make your child sleepy or dizzy. This can make them unsteady on their feet when walking. It is important to know how your child's medications may affect them, so you can be aware of the risk of falls.
- **Always make sure the call bell is within reach so you or your child can get help if needed.**

- **To lower the risk of falls:**
 - › Never leave your child in a highchair or an infant swing without someone to watch them.
 - › Ask someone to help you help your child to sit, stand up, or go to the bathroom, if needed.
 - › Make sure your child uses nonslip footwear that fits well.
- Go with your child to the bathroom if:
 - › they have medical equipment attached (like an I.V. pole).
 - › they are getting up for the first time after surgery.
- We will give you more information on ways to help prevent falls. Ask a member of your child's health care team if you have any questions or concerns.

Infections

- Washing your hands well with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer is the best way to prevent the spread of infections. Protect your child from germs by washing your hands when entering or leaving their room.
- Always ask your child's health care provider if they have washed their hands before they provide your child's care.

- Hand hygiene is also very important when you go to common areas of the unit, like the kitchen and family room. Use the hand sanitizer located throughout the hospital.
- Ask visitors **not** to visit your child if they have infectious illnesses like:
 - › Flu
 - › Diarrhea (loose, watery poop)
 - › Vomiting (throwing up)
 - › Fever (temperature above 38 °C or 100.4 °F)
 - › A rash
- If your child has an infection and needs to stay in an isolation room, we will ask that they **not** have visitors. This is to protect your child and others being cared for on the unit.

Pressure ulcers and skin breakdown

- Pressure ulcers are sores caused by constant pressure on the skin. When your child is admitted, a nurse will assess their risk of pressure ulcers. Your child's health care team will keep checking for this throughout your child's stay.

- **Your child may get a pressure ulcer from:**
 - › being less active (staying in a bed, chair, or wheelchair for a long time, or having trouble changing positions without help).
 - › damp skin from sweating, or dirty or wet diapers.
 - › constant pressure on their skin from equipment (like an oxygen mask, a splint, an I.V. line, or a feeding tube).
 - › not eating enough nutrient-dense foods. This does not cause pressure ulcers, but it does raise your child's risk of getting them.
- **To prevent pressure ulcers:**
 - › Have your child walk and change position often, unless their health care team tells you not to.
 - › **Do not** pull or rub your child's skin against a surface over and over. For example, use a sheet to move your child up if they are sliding down in bed by lifting the sheet.
 - › Use a soft cloth and be gentle when bathing your child. **Do not** rub or massage any red areas.
 - › Keep your child's skin dry. Get rid of any moisture from sweat or urine (pee) right away by changing diapers and sheets, as needed.

- › Offer your child healthy foods. Ask to talk to a dietitian if your child is not eating well. This can raise your child's risk of getting a pressure ulcer.
- › **Tell a member of your child's health care team if you see any new areas of redness or skin breakdown on your child.**

Safety tips

Sleep

- Children under age 3 are safer in a crib, even if they do not sleep in one at home.
 - › If needed, your child may have a dome over their crib so that they cannot fall or climb out.
- **Bed rails must be locked in the full 'up' position at all times.**
- Keep the height of the crib or bed in the lowest position to prevent falls.
- Take away any toys, food, or other objects from your child's crib or bed when they are sleeping.
- **Do not** leave anything that could hurt your child (like strings, wires, cords, necklaces, or beads) in their crib or bed.

- If your child's arm or leg is sticking out between the crib or bed rails, move them so all their limbs (arms and legs) are inside the crib or bed.

Never leave your child in a crib or a bed with the side rails down or in the middle position, unless someone is with them at their bedside.

Internet use

- Be aware if your child is using the hospital's free Wi-Fi and read the terms of agreement. You are responsible for monitoring your child's Internet use. The hospital does **not** guarantee the safety of any websites.
- Review the social networking websites your child visits. Make sure they are not sharing any photos, videos, profile information, online journals, or writing that puts their privacy or the privacy of any of their friends or family, other patients, or health care staff at risk.
- Be aware of and involved in:
 - › the websites your child is visiting.
 - › their activities on these websites (like games or social media websites with chat).

- Be mindful of your child's screen time. Healthy sleep patterns are important for their recovery. Looking at a phone, tablet, or TV screen can make it harder for your child to fall asleep.

Medication safety

- Know what medications your child is taking and why they are taking them. Make sure you know the name, dose (amount), and how many times a day it should be taken. Ask your pharmacist for a list of your child's current medications if you are not sure. Remember to include any over-the-counter medications (like acetaminophen [Tylenol®], ibuprofen [Advil®], vitamins, and herbal products).
- **During your child's visit, make sure:**
 - › Their health care provider repeats back their name correctly before giving them any medication.
 - › You tell their health care provider about any allergies or reactions to medications your child has had.
 - › Their health care provider tells you what medications your child is being given and why.
 - › You ask questions if they are given medication that looks different from what they took at home, or from what they were given in the hospital before.

- › You ask for a list of all the medications they will be taking after they leave the hospital. Keep this list with you.
- › You talk to their health care provider about any questions or concerns you have about their medication (like how to know if it is working, how long they will be taking it, or if there are any side effects).
- › You tell their health care provider about any medications you have brought to the hospital. **Do not keep any medications you brought from home for you or your child at your child's bedside, or anywhere your child can reach from their bed.**

Play

- It is important for your child to play. This will help them get used to being in the hospital, and help with their recovery. Bring your child's favourite toy with you.
- As all toys must be washed between each use, **do not** return toys to the playroom. Keep them in your child's room.

- **In common areas:**
 - › Watch your child at all times.
 - › Check with staff before bringing in food or drinks.
 - › Keep the doorways clear.
 - › **Do not** use cords to charge electronic devices or toys. They are a tripping hazard.

Bathing

- It is important to know how your child may be affected by their medications before they take a bath or a shower.
- Make sure the water temperature is not too hot before placing your child in the tub or the shower. Use your elbow to check the temperature.
- Watch your child **at all times** when they are in the tub or the shower.
- Make sure you can reach the call bell at all times.
- **Drain the tub as soon as your child is done bathing to prevent drowning.** Never leave a tub full of water unattended.

Together we can keep your child safe.

We welcome your questions and comments.

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here:
<https://library.nshealth.ca/Patients-Guides>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

*Prepared by: Nova Scotia Health Women and Children's Provincial Policy
Working Group
Designed by: Library Services*

WX85-2118 © November 2023 Nova Scotia Health Authority
To be reviewed November 2026 or sooner, if needed.
Learn more: <https://library.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources>