Safe kids Healthy kids Happy kids

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If Your Child Needs to Go To the Emergency Room

Childhood injuries and illness happen. Many children visit a hospital emergency room. Prepare *before* you have a medical emergency.

Know where the hospital emergency rooms are located. Do you have medical insurance or public aid? Check to see which hospital takes your card. *Some insurance plans may not pay for services at hospitals that are not on their plan*.

Keep your child's medical history. Use a paper or small notebook. Include:

- shot records,
- medications,
- herbal supplements/ vitamins,
- past surgeries,
- allergies or bad reactions to medicines,
- chronic illness,
- recent illness, accidents or incidents.

Take with you when you go to the hospital. It is hard to give facts when you are in crisis or upset.

Try to stay calm. "Children are scared when they're seriously ill or injured," says James Loomis, PhD., a clinical psychologist at Connecticut Children's Medical Center. If they see their parent scared and out of control, they may become more frightened.

Assess the situation. Should you call 911, call your doctor or drive to the emergency room? For example, if your child has trouble breathing or is unconscious, he needs an ambulance. In less-acute emergencies, a child's doctor will be able to give you advice on what to do or where to go.

Be able to tell the doctor what led up to your child's ER visit. Give as many details as possible. If you were not present when your child got sick or injured, find out what happened.

Stay with your child during treatment and procedures. Hold her, touch her and talk to her calmly. Distract her with toys, stories or songs. Your child trusts you, but she may not trust the medical staff. Reassure her, but be truthful about what is going to happen.

Be respectful and supportive of the hospital medical staff. Your child will feel better if he trusts the medical staff and if he thinks that you trust them as well. If you do not understand, ask questions. Be patient.

Take some books, coloring books or toys with you to the hospital. Emergency rooms are often crowded, noisy and chaotic. Even waiting rooms can be scary for kids. They will likely see and hear people who are very sick or hurt. Kids can be distracted. This may help keep your child calm while waiting to see the doctor.

Make sure that you understand what your child's doctor wants you to do after you leave the hospital. Doctors call these instructions *discharge orders*. They may include medicine to take, a special diet, follow-up care with your child's doctor or further medical tests. If you do not understand, ask questions before you leave.

Parents also can help their child recover emotionally from the emergency room visit. Kids often work through their feelings through play. They may want to play "E.R.", or they may draw pictures about their visit. This is OK. It is healthy. It helps them cope with their stress.

Call the Parent Help Line. We listen. We can find you help.

1-217-544-5808 or 1-888-727-5889 from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. , 7 days a week.

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