



WESTERN**KIDS**HEALTH

Preparing to go to the Hospital



A guide for parents of young children

About us



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We are paediatric therapists who are passionate about supporting parents of babies, toddlers and young children. We know that life isn't always smooth sailing. We have created this guide to help you and your child plan and prepare for going to hospital, to hopefully reduce worry and fear. As with everything we do, play is at the centre of this preparation. Play helps young children understand and process the world.

Happy Playing!

Nicole, Hannah and Shannae

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DISCLAIMER



Although we are paediatric therapists, this guide is designed to empower parents and caregivers through education and a selection of ideas to prepare to go to hospital. Each child and their situation is unique and it is up to you, as a parent, to choose the ideas you find suitable and achievable for your child. This guide does not constitute medical advice. If you are unsure please talk to your GP or treating therapist to ascertain whether these activities are right for your child.

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INTRODUCTION

Preparing for a trip to hospital and surgery, through planning and play, reduces anxiety, negative emotions and post operative pain in children.

Going to the hospital is a big deal for our little ones. It is new, the lack control and often as parents, we are anxious about how things might go (our little ones are really good at picking up on our emotions).

Research shows that planning and preparation for both yourself and your child is helpful in reducing anxiety, fear, frustration and distress. Role play and pretend play are secret superpowers in helping your child process this new, big thing that is happening.

This guide was created to help parents just like you, prepare for hospital and support your children.



IDEAS FOR PREPARATION

Question List

Ask the doctors all the questions you want to – you're allowed to be prepared and have reassurance, no question is a silly question.



2

Social Story

[» Download here](#)

You can access the social story template here
Customize this story template with your own photos / names and read to your child leading up to the hospital.



3

Play

Pretend play and role play hospital and surgery play at home. Ideally this would start 2 weeks prior to visiting hospital but can be anytime.



4

Packing

We have created the ultimate "what to pack" hospital list for you. This list was created from our own and other parents experiences in taking their children into hospital.



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IDEAS & EXAMPLES FOR QUESTIONS



How long does it take for the anaesthetic to take effect?



Will I be able to be there when my child wakes up?



Can I support my child in my lap when they undergo the anaesthetic?



How long will my child be under anaesthetic for?



What are the side effects of anaesthetic? (sleep, mood, hunger, sore throat)



How long do we have to wait once we are in hospital to go into surgery?



Do you use numbing cream for before inserting canula/lines?
How long does the numbing cream take to work?



How long after the procedure / surgery will our follow up be scheduled for? Who do I call if I have concerns before then?



After the operation, how long will it be painful for? Will my child have to avoid any activities? (swim, run, climb etc)



PREPARING FOR HOSPITAL **QUESTION LIST**

FILL IN THE SPACES BELOW WITH QUESTIONS TO ASK
YOUR MEDICAL AND ALLIED HEALTH TEAM

BEFORE SURGERY

<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

AFTER SURGERY

<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____



IDEAS & EXAMPLES FOR **PLAY**

Role Play



Role playing scenarios with your child that may happen in the hospital is a great way to prepare them as much as you can for things that may be asked of them, E.g. practise counting backwards while breathing deep in and out of a face mask on, listening to their chest with a stethoscope, practice getting on the bed and having their temperature and blood pressure taken.

Pretend Play



Pretend play helps to let your child feel like they have some control over the situation. It can also help to display to you exactly what they do understand and where you might need to give more information or reassurance. Allow your child the control to be the doctor or nurse and practise on you or their favourite toys.



ITEMS AT HOME FOR PRETEND PLAY

Setting up a play tray for your child's toy shelf is a great way to encourage independence in pretend play. Items from around the home you can include:

	Thermometer
	Bandages, Slings and Band-aids
	Syringes
	Facemask
	Medicine containers
	Dolls / Teddybears (patients)
	Clipboard
	DIY Stethoscope (HEADBAND & BOTTLECAP)



WHAT'S AT THE HOSPITAL PLAY



OXYGEN
MASK



DOCTOR



MONITOR



IV POLE



HOSPITAL
BED



OXYGEN
MONITOR

BLOOD PRESSURE
MONITOR



HOSPITAL MEMORY

PLAY



OTHER IDEAS FOR PLAY

Bubble Play

Playing with masks is a great way to make them less "scary". Bubble blowing is a simple and fun activity to get started for toddlers through to preschoolers. You can buy these masks from your local chemist (ask for the asthma spacer mask) Simply dip in the bubbles and blow. It doesn't matter if your child is not keen to put it right over their face or gets it wrong - its all about play! Click the photo to watch a video.



Hospital Toys



CHECKLIST FOR HOSPITAL BAG

- iPad/tablet with pre-downloaded shows and music
- Chargers
- Bubbles
- Comforter (dummy, teddy etc)
- Colouring or water pen books (take packaging off prior)
- Favourite toy / books (hidden for a length of time before)
- Waterbottle for you both
- Snackbox for you both
- Favourite foods in snackbox (cold, soft things are easier)
- Blanket or jumper (hospitals can be cold)
- Spare clothes (for you both)
- Carrier / pram



OTHER TIPS FOR ON THE DAY



FASTING

A HANGRY child is not much fun. The time you can wait for surgery can be long. Hide the snack box and distraction is key. Screen time, bubbles and colouring can work best.



QUESTIONS

Don't be afraid to ask the surgeon, anaesthetist, nurses or support team any questions you have. Take your pre-made list of questions into the hospital.



GOING UNDER ANAESTHETIC

Take your child's comforter to theatre and ask for them to be accessible to your child in recovery. When children go under they may shake, their eyes may roll. This is normal but can be distressing to watch.



DURING

Have a family member, friend or support person you can call. You will need the distraction. Go for a walk, get some food and fresh air. Make sure the staff have your mobile number to contact you when your child is in recovery.



AFTER

Your child may wake up aggressive or upset. This is normal but can be scary / distressing. Ask the nurses for support and have their favourite food ready. Your child's sleep and mood may be disrupted for up to a week or so after anaesthetic.



SETTING EXPECTATIONS FOR AFTER HOSPITAL

Once you get home from hospital, routines and expectations may be different for a while whilst your child recovers.

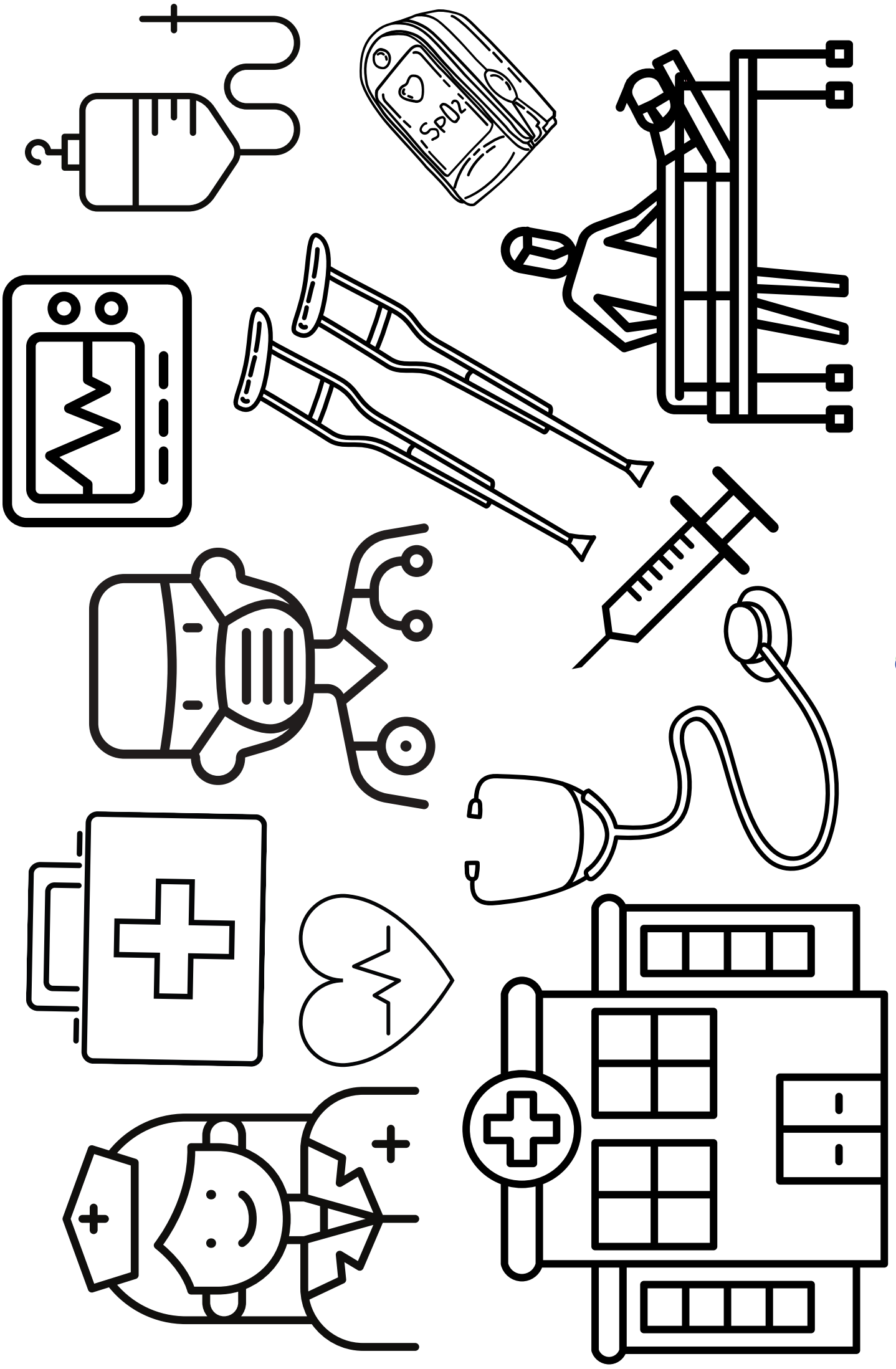
- They may sleep more or less or wake up through the night
- They may have a sore throat
- They may have a smaller or bigger appetite
- They will likely need to rest
- They may have some big emotions
- They may need some time off school or day care

Continuing roll play can be beneficial, especially if they were overwhelmed by the hospital experience or need to return for follow-up appointments.

Limiting screen time when they are feeling "well" and able to play will help discriminate between play and rest times. Screen time may be unlimited, but if not its better to set expectations for your little one about how much screen time is allowed - use timers, number of shows or other definitive measures.

We have included a free colouring mat for you to print and colour with your child to de-brief the experience in the days after hospital.





LOOKING FOR EXTRA **SUPPORT**



If you require some extra support to help your family and/or your child prepare for a hospital visit, it can be useful to seek assistance from your local health care professionals. An Occupational Therapist or a Psychologist can be helpful to gather further understanding and build a foundation for you to feel confident to tackle a hospital stay with your child.

BOOK WITH US



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Want more? Join the
Play Academy



The Play Academy is an evidence based, accurate and accessible online program designed to support your child's development from birth to 5 years old. It is easy and fun and our team of paediatric experts are there to answer all your questions.

So instead of worrying about the NEXT thing, you can be in the present moment with your baby child... the real magic.

JOIN NOW



Thank you and keep in touch

We hope you have enjoyed this preparing for hospital guide. We hope that it has lessened yours and your child's worry and fear around going to hospital and having surgery.

We would love to hear about your experiences and see your child doing hospital role play so please tag us on Instagram

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