

Siblings

How a child or teenager reacts to the hospitalisation of a brother or sister is affected by:

- the age of a sibling
- lengthy of hospital admission
- seriousness of illness
- amount of time the child/teenager is separated from parents
- quality of explanations and answers to a child/teenagers questions
- how much attention is given to the child/teenagers feelings
- the nature of past experiences with hospitals
- the nature of past experiences of separation from parents
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It is important to remember that each child/teenager learns and adjusts at his or her own pace and will handle situations differently.

Children/teenagers may express their feelings by:

- Eating or talking less
- Withdrawn behaviour
- Acting in a way that gets more attention
- Temper tantrums
- Returning to behaviours from an earlier age
- Having difficulty sleeping
- Not doing well at school
- Having discipline problems
- Not talking about their fears and worries as they don't want to worry/upset their parents
- Developing headaches, rashes, stomach aches or other reactions

Things you can do to help the sibling feel included and cope with what is happening to their brother or sister:

- Write or 'tape' letters
- Draw pictures or make things for the patient's hospital room
- Read stories about going to the hospital
- Tell them its ok to show their emotions
- Encourage to visit their sibling at the hospital or phone or email
- Maintain consistent family routines

*Information from: When a brother or sister goes to hospital: Helping children cope
University of Wisconsin Children's Hospital*