



Age-Specific Tips for Supporting Your Hospitalized Child *Adolescent (12-18 years)*

Adolescents are:

- Developing an identity of his or her own
- Seeking independence from caregivers
- Shifting his or her dependence to peers
- Experiencing a strong desire to fit in
- Engaging in risky behaviors
- Concerned about body image

Adolescents develop a sense of identity when their caregivers support their transition from child to adult by allowing them to explore their own style, perspectives, and overall personalities. Adolescents can experience feelings of confusion when held back from transitioning to adulthood.

Activities to promote development:

Card and board games
Puzzles
Books
Arts and crafts
Journals
Activity books
Adult coloring books
Movies
Music
Video games
Activities that encourage interaction with peers, self-reflection, and growth

Common hospital stressors for adolescents:

Loss of daily routine
New environments
Separation from loved ones and peers
Loss of role within peer group
Changes to body image
Fear of pain
Loss of control
Lack of independence
Forced dependence on adults
Limitations to eating
Fear of being different
Fear of loss of identity
Fear of falling behind in school or extracurriculars
Fear of death

How to help your adolescent cope:

- Create and follow a daily schedule.
- Encourage visitation from peers and loved ones.
- Respect choices of privacy.
- Be present and involved during potentially stressful or painful situations.
- Be open and honest as to what will happen and how it will feel.
- Involve your child in his or her plan of care.
- Offer realistic choices when available.
- Encourage discussion regarding his or her medical care.
- Encourage expression of emotions and validate them.
- Acknowledge feelings regarding body image.
- Bring familiar activities (likes/dislikes) into his or her hospital environment.

***Your adolescent can sense changes to your behavior caused by anxiety, stress, or fear. These changes can cause a mirroring response in his or her behavior, which can negatively impact his or her ability to cope. Be sure to take personal time to care for yourself.**