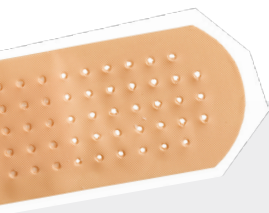


# Your child in the hospital

## a stressful event

Your child has been admitted to the hospital. A hospitalization has often far-reaching consequences and can cause stress for parents and children.



### Stressful factors can be:

- not knowing what is going to happen, insecurity
  - changes to the child's appearance
- being separated from the familiar surroundings
  - seeing other sick children
- coming into contact with unfamiliar equipment
  - seeing that your child is in pain
  - fear of a bad outcome

### common reactions from parents:

- Being anxious or becoming easily upset
- Feeling powerless
- Functioning on auto pilot
- Wanting to stay constantly with the child
- Being overly vigilant or nervous
- Being irritable and not able to take much
- Having trouble sleeping or eating
- Losing track of the situation
- Having trouble concentrating
- Feeling guilty

### common reactions from children:

#### *Babies and young children*

- Being restless and overly irritated
- Having trouble sleeping or eating
- Being anxious or nervous and becoming easily upset
- Start bedwetting or thumb sucking again

#### *Older children (also previous reactions)*

- Being miserable, rebellious or angry
- Isolating oneself or, on the contrary, being more affectionate/clinging
- Feeling alone, missing friends and family
- Being insecure about their looks

These are normal reactions to an abnormal event. And everybody has this reaction to a greater or smaller extent.

### how long do these stress reactions last?

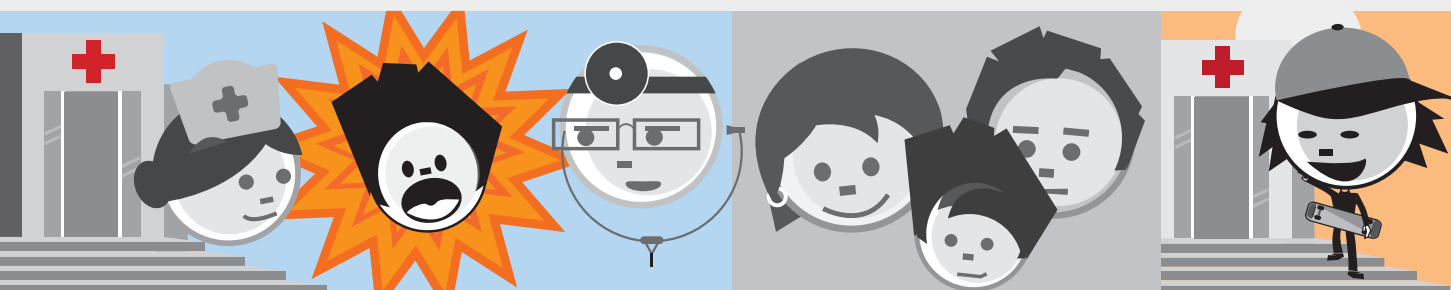
These reactions can last for some days or weeks. As you gain more control over the situation and the latter stabilises, the stress reactions will abate.

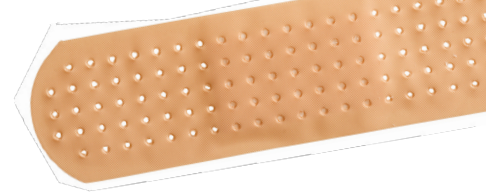
### how can you deal with these reactions?

There are things that can help you to reduce stress for yourself or your child. You can find a number of tips for this on the reverse side.

If you need support, discuss this with a nurse or doctor.

They can put you into contact with a social worker or child psychologist.





# 10 tips for parents in the hospital

## 1 Look for distraction for your child

You are the best person to reassure and comfort your child. Distract the child, for example by reading a book to him/her or by going to the play room. Often more things are allowed than you think.

**IDEA:** Talk to your child about something nice when he/she is being injected and compliment your child afterwards

## 2 Give your child a secure feeling

Let your child know you are there for him/her. Say to your child that you are leaving and when you are coming back. Make the hospital environment as familiar as possible. And tell your child that the people in the hospital have a lot of knowledge and experience to help children get better.

**IDEA:** Bring a cuddly toy, music, toys or a photograph from home

## 3 Show understanding

Children can react in various ways such as crying, clinging or getting angry. Accept these reactions from your child. These are normal reactions to an abnormal event. Explain to your child that his/her reaction is understandable.

**IDEA:** Say for example 'I can well imagine that it is distressing and that you are angry. That is completely normal.

## 4 Ensure routine and order

Try to stick to a daily routine and arrange it with the medical staff. This way, the hospital environment becomes more controllable and predictable.

**IDEA:** Make a day activities programme, for example with an educational worker

## 5 Increase the feeling of control

Look for ways to give your child as much control as possible of what is happening. Let your child make his/her own choices, even if it concerns only small matters.

**IDEA:** Let your child choose for example if the injection will be on the left or the right side

## 6 Provide explanations

Help your child understand what is happening. Answer the questions of your child and give especially factual

information. Children are quick to interpret things themselves and thus get a wrong impression of events. Prevent phantasing, stick to the facts and use simple words.

**IDEA:** Say for example, that injections hurt, but explain why it is necessary

## 7 Talking helps

Encourage your child to talk about his or her feelings. Help your child with naming feelings (angry, afraid, happy, sad). It helps young children to express their feelings through play, drawing and by telling stories. Also stimulate contact with friends and classmates.

**IDEA:** Make a drawing together of things in the hospital

## 8 Keep taking care of yourself

If you are upset or worried yourself and do not get enough sleep, it is harder to support your child. Try to get sufficient rest and sleep, even if this may be difficult sometimes. Take time to relax. Take the time to go outside once in a while and walk, exercise or read. Do things that make you feel good, even if it is for a short while.

**IDEA:** Take a daily walk near the hospital

## 9 Do not hesitate to ask

If something is not clear or if you need information during the hospitalisation, ask for additional explanation or information. It is allowed.

**IDEA:** Write down questions and plan regular consultations with the medical staff

## 10 Look for support

Support is important; use the help offered. Or ask for help if you need it. People want to help, but often do not know how. Share your worries with others such as family, friends, church, neighbours or medical staff. Do not bottle up your feelings.

**IDEA:** Keep a diary or a weblog for example

initiatief:



emma kinderziekenhuis AMC

mede mogelijk gemaakt door:

