Getting ready

Moving to a new adult health-care team can bring mixed emotions, including excitement, fear, relief or sadness. You have probably gotten to know the Hospital and many of the people who work here. When making the switch to a new centre, it helps if you know more about how things work there.

A time of transition

One of the many changes that come with becoming an adult involves changing where you receive health care. Another is that you – and not your family – will be primarily responsible for your health needs.

- At SickKids, we provide family-centred care, so we involve the family in decision-making.
- Adult care is patient-centred, focusing on your needs and wishes by making sure that you are part of the decision-making process.
- You can expect to be alone when you see your health-care providers during your visit. If you want your parents or someone else to be with you and receive information too, you can request that.
Tips for adult care

Be GLADD

Give information
Know about your medical history and current medications. Tell your team what works best for you.

Listen to the suggestions
Your new team knows a lot about adults with your health condition.

Ask questions
Write questions down before your visit so you don’t forget. If you don’t understand something, ask again. There are no silly questions. Get all the information you need.

Decide on a plan
Choose a plan that is good for your health and works best with your lifestyle – for school, work and family.

Do it
Get involved with your care! Take your medications and attend your medical appointments.

Continued care is important

Once you turn 18, you can no longer be admitted to SickKids overnight so it is important to be connected with an adult facility that can admit you. People with chronic conditions do better if they have life-long follow up. You probably already know from your experience that catching problems early makes a big difference.

You may also have questions about becoming an adult with a chronic condition.

Some common concerns are:
- Relationships and sex
- Pregnancy/fathering a child: contraceptive methods, risks of pregnancy, risks to children (before/after birth)
- Smoking and use of drugs and alcohol while taking prescribed medications
- Feeling different, anxious and/or depressed
- Fitting your health care in with school or work
- Health insurance (for example, to pay for your medications)

These questions and concerns are not unusual and you should feel free to discuss them with your health-care team.

It is a good idea to carry your health card, hospital card, and MyHealth Passport with you at all times.
How you can prepare for adult clinic visits?

Remember, this is YOUR health-care appointment.
Your questions and concerns are important and will be the focus of your visit. Plan ahead and take responsibility for what you need to take to the appointment.

Plan ahead

- Bring a support person or family member to the clinic if you feel more comfortable
- Think about how you will be getting to your first appointment
- Find out how to get to the building and clinic
- Find out where parking is available if you will be driving
- Give yourself enough travel time to get to your appointment

Be in charge of your medications

- Know the names and dosage amounts of your medications
- Keep track of when you need refills and new prescriptions
- Check to see if you are going to need a prescription for something before you go to your next appointment

Tip

To order refills on time, some people put a week’s worth of medications in a plastic bag or folded up in a piece of paper at the bottom of the pill bottle. When they get down to the last loose pills in the bottle, they call for a refill knowing they have a week to get the medication.

If you are put on a new medication, write it in your MyHealth Passport.

Appointment checklist

- Health card
- Hospital or clinic card (you will be given one at your first visit if you need to have one)
- Name and address of your family doctor
- A list of questions or issues you want to talk about
- A medication list with your pharmacy’s phone number on it
- An expectation that you will be the one giving consent to treatment
- A book or magazine to help pass the time while you are waiting to be seen
- A snack or some cash to buy something to eat or drink
- Knowledge of:
  - Your condition
  - Your past procedures and surgeries
  - Your current medications
  - Any other medical problems you have
- A MyHealth Passport (you can create this by visiting www.sickkids.ca/myhealthpassport)
Things you will need if admitted to a hospital

Adult hospitals have most of the same staff, but do not have the same special services as SickKids. If you think you might be admitted to a hospital, take some entertainment with you, such as:

- Sudoku / word search
- Puzzles / cards
- Magazines / books
- Knitting

If you want a TV or phone in your room, you will have to rent them at a cost. Keep a close eye on your personal belongings such as iPods and other electronics; thefts in hospitals are common.

Be prepared to share your room with other patients.

You are the most important part of the team

Your teams at SickKids and at your adult-care clinic wish you the very best in this important step toward adulthood.

Resources

- Good 2 Go website - www.sickkids.ca/good2go
  Lists links to helpful transition sites and more
- www.sexualityandu.ca
  A great resource on sex and sexuality
- The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario - www.cpso.on.ca
  A good resource to find a family doctor
- Healthy and Ready to Work - www.hrtw.org
  An American transition service for youth
- Chronically Happy, Joyful Living in Spite of Chronic Illness (2002)
- Easy For You to Say: Q&As for Teens Living with Chronic Illness or Disability (2005)
  Author: Miriam Kaufman, Key Porter Books, available at SickKids 5Fifty5 Shop and via Amazon.com

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