

for children with low vision and blindness

## Preparing children for hospital visits

Every child dreads visits to the doctor or the hospital. Can you imagine how much worse it will be for your child who cannot see. What can you do to make hospital visits less traumatic for your child?

### It helps to take control

*Remember a child is always a passive participant when taken to see a doctor. Is it any wonder then that your child is scared and irritable in such a situation?*

Find ways to get your child to participate more actively in the visit. Encourage your child to interact with the doctor. You could, for instance, help your child select a flower from your garden to take to the doctor. It is a good way to get even a shy or a very young child to interact. It will also make for a pleasant start to the visit.



### It helps to know

*Remember even a routine examination can be traumatic since children don't know what to expect and memories of previous visits may not be pleasant ones.*



Always talk to your child in advance about the visit. Explain what the doctor will do, why it needs to be done and when each thing will be finished. You can use dolls to act out the visits. One important thing – NEVER, NEVER, LIE! Tell your child if something will hurt or taste bitter. Remember to tell the child what is happening and what will happen next. Tap the part of the body the doctor will be touching next to alert the child. This will help your child know what to expect and when it will all be over.

### It helps to feel comfortable

*Try always to put yourself in your child's shoes. Imagine how strange a clinic must seem to a child who cannot see – the noises, the smells, the lights, the people, all these can be overwhelming and add to the child's anxiety.*

Take something your child is familiar with; for example, the little mat your child sleeps on or a favourite toy. The child can hold on to these familiar things and feel secure. Giving your child something of yours to hold on to during the visit is also a good idea. As far as possible, stay in physical contact – keep a hand on your child's leg or shoulder throughout the visit.



### It helps to have an easy way to communicate

*Anxiety and tension can cause a child to lose the ability to communicate clearly. Particularly after a surgery, the child may feel too disoriented to find the right words to tell you what she wants or feels.*

Make sure your child has some way to communicate with you. Take pictures or objects a child can use to tell you of simple needs – like wanting water or a particular person.



### Remember:

Hospital visits are likely to be frequent through the early years. Give your child something to look forward to by ending a visit with something your child enjoys, like a special meal, a game, or even a well-loved song.



Chetana Charitable Trust

Author : Namita Jacob  
Illustrations : Hesperian Foundation

Contact : Vidya Sagar, 1, Ranjith Road, Kotturpuram, Chennai-85. Ph : 2235 4785



VIDYA SAGAR  
(Formerly The Sankar Society of India, Chennai)