

MY PARENT IS IN HOSPITAL



Information for older children and teenagers with a parent in a mental health ward

HOSPITAL:

WARD:

PARENT'S MAIN NURSE:

PARENT'S DOCTOR:

WARD PHONE NUMBER:

WEBSITE:



This is a leaflet for anyone who has a parent in hospital with a mental health problem.

It can be very stressful when your parent goes into hospital. You might feel alone, confused or scared about the future. You might not know who to talk to or what you can say.

We want to help by giving you some facts. Firstly, it's important to know that you are not alone. Many young people are in the same position and there's support out there for you. Most importantly, we want you to know that it is not your fault that your parent has become unwell.

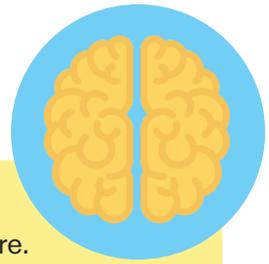


Why is my parent in hospital?

Health professionals have talked to your parent and think that they have a problem with their mental health that needs care and treatment in hospital to get better.

Mental health problems affect the brain. They are also called 'mental illness', 'mental disorders' or 'psychiatric problems'. They affect how we think, feel or behave. In the UK, 1 in 4 of us experiences a mental health problem each year. Just like physical illnesses, mental health problems are part of being human and they can affect anybody.

Are there different types of mental health problems?



Yes. There are lots of different types and they need different treatments. They can vary from mild to more severe.

When people become more unwell they may not be able to do things that they normally can. They may start to behave differently or even strangely. Sometimes they might hurt themselves or others in some way.

This can all be confusing, even frightening, for the people who care about them. If things get this bad they may need to come into hospital to get the help they need to get better.

Here are some of the common problems we help with in hospital:

DEPRESSION:

When people have depression they feel very sad all the time. They might be irritable and find it difficult to enjoy things. They may find it difficult to think clearly or talk to people. They may struggle to do normal things like eating or sleeping.

BIPOLAR DISORDER / 'MANIC DEPRESSION':

When people have bipolar disorder their mood may change from being very 'high', with lots of energy, to being irritable or even angry. They might talk a lot, stop sleeping, do strange or embarrassing things and have unrealistic ideas. Their mood can also switch to becoming depressed.

PSYCHOSIS:

People with psychosis can lose touch with reality. They might hear or see things that aren't there, believe things that are not true, or not make sense when they are talking. Some people with psychosis have bipolar disorder or an illness called 'schizophrenia'.

There are lots of other mental health problems that we sometimes treat in hospital. For example, some people with personality disorders can find it difficult to manage their emotions safely and some people need help in hospital for drug and alcohol problems.

What causes mental illness?

Both our mental and physical health can be affected by many different things. Traumatic experiences, stress, chemical imbalances in the brain, loneliness or problems with drugs or alcohol can all affect our health. Often there is no one reason why someone has become mentally unwell. Sometimes there are no clear reasons at all.

It is important to know that if your parent has a serious mental health problem it does not mean that you will have the same problem. Remember you can't 'catch' mental illness!

Do people always know when they are mentally ill?

Your parent may have agreed to come into hospital. If this happened, they'll be a 'voluntary patient'. This usually means that they can leave hospital whenever they want.

Sometimes when people become very unwell they may lose touch with reality. They may think they're OK, even when everyone else can see they are not OK and need help.

If someone doesn't realise they're unwell, they will probably not want to come into hospital. They may want to stay in their own homes with their families, which we understand. If your parent didn't agree to come into hospital then doctors and a social worker will have admitted them to hospital under a 'section' of the Mental Health Act (this is sometimes called 'being sectioned'). This means they can't leave hospital whenever they want. We only bring people into hospital under a section if we think it's essential for them to be in hospital to stay safe and get better.

How long will they be in hospital?

There is no set time as everyone is different. Sometimes people need to be in hospital for only a few days. Sometimes people need to be in hospital for a few weeks or months. We always try to help people get back home as soon as possible.



How will my parent be helped?

Doctors and nurses, psychologists, occupational therapists and social workers all work in mental health hospitals. There may be art and music therapists running therapy groups on the ward too. If your parent is religious, the hospital might be able to arrange for someone from their faith to visit them. All these people will spend time talking to your parent to try to understand their problem and think together about how they can best help your parent. Your parent will also probably be given medication to help them get better.

What's the ward like?

Your parent will probably have their own bedroom and possibly their own bathroom. There will be a TV room and a dining room. There may be other facilities like a garden, hospital gym or a prayer room.



When can I see my parent?

This depends on how well they are. Sometimes people are too unwell for their children to visit. This doesn't mean they don't want to see you. It means the doctors and nurses have decided it's too early.

As soon as it's possible you will be able to talk to them on the phone if you want to. It's also OK if you don't want to visit or speak to them yet. We know it's a very difficult time for everyone, including you. If that's the case make sure you let the adults caring for you know.

If you are going to visit your parent in hospital, then your visit needs to be arranged with the ward staff. Usually this is arranged for you by the adults caring for you. If you are older you may want to call the ward to arrange this yourself. Usually there is a special visiting room away from the ward for families to use, as people under 18 are not usually allowed on wards.

You don't need to bring anything with you if you visit. If you want you could bring a get well soon card or something small like a book or your parent's favourite magazine. When you first visit, don't be surprised if your parent isn't back to their normal self yet.

Remember – getting better can take time.

What happens after my parent leaves hospital?

A team called a 'Home Treatment Team' or 'Crisis Team' may come to visit your parent at home every day for a few weeks to make sure things are going OK. After this, people usually see a community mental health team ('CMHT') or GP regularly for a while. A CMHT is a team of specialised nurses, doctors and social workers who help people with their mental health.

If you moved out of your home when your parent went into hospital, you may not be able to move back straight away. Plans can be complicated and it can take time to get things sorted. You may also have a social worker to support you during this process.



What should I do if I am worried?

You might feel worried, upset or even angry in this situation. Sometimes you might feel guilty, even though you know you shouldn't. These feelings are all normal.

Remember your parent being ill is never your fault.

It can be very difficult for anyone to cope alone at times like this. Please speak to an adult you trust about how you are feeling. You can also access support through going to see your GP. If you find it easier, you could talk anonymously through:

Childline (0800 1111/ www.childline.org.uk)

Whatever the situation, it's really important to look after yourself and get the help you need. Remember to do things you enjoy like listening to music, seeing friends or watching a movie. Don't feel bad if you find you're having a good time either. Everyone needs a break!



How can I find out more?

It's really important that you talk to someone that you trust about your parent being in hospital and ask them any questions that you have.

These situations are often complicated and there's no such thing as a 'stupid' question.

Some places have groups where you can meet others who have parents with mental health problems. These are sometimes called 'young carers' groups. Ask an adult to help you find out if there is one near you.

If you want to know more about any particular mental health problems or treatment, you can visit these websites for more information:

www.kidstimefoundation.org and www.copmi.net.au are great websites for children who have parents with mental illness.

www.youngminds.org.uk – this website is for young people worried about their own mental health.

These are more general websites with information for adults:

www.rethink.org

www.mind.org.uk

www.mentalhealth.org.uk

www.nhs.uk



Remember – you're not alone, it's never your fault, and things will get easier. Hang on in there!

This is one of four leaflets we have produced for children with a parent in a mental health hospital. Two leaflets are for 3 to 6 year olds: "Sammy Bear's Mummy is in Hospital", and "Sally Bear's Daddy is in Hospital". Two are called "My parent is in hospital" – one is for 7 to 11 year olds and this one is for those aged 11 and over.

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