

Helpful Tips for Parents

Before your Heart Child is born

- ♥ Ask questions. Educate yourself about your child's CHD!
- ♥ Find a Pediatric Cardiologist and set up an initial consultation.
- ♥ Find a Cardiac Surgeon and set up an initial consultation.
- ♥ Contact the Social Worker at the hospital your child is having surgery at. Ask questions about the hospital, the local area, and where to lodge. Sometimes the Social Worker can take you on a tour of the hospital and unit your child will be after surgery.
- ♥ Network with other heart families to establish a support system to help you get through this difficult time and offer emotional support.
- ♥ Set up a care page for you child. This will allow you to post updates and photos as well as receive messages. www.carepages.com
- ♥ Ask your employer about Family Medical Leave (FMLA) www.dol.gov/esa/whd/fmla/
- ♥ Talk to the siblings. Be honest and try to explain what will happen.
- ♥ Make arrangements for someone to watch your children/animals/house/plants.

While Hospitalized

- ♥ Be your child's advocate! Don't be shy to question why certain procedures are being done and what medications are being given. Read your child's chart. The more you educate yourself and know about your child's condition, the better you are at making decisions about your child's health.
- ♥ Contact the Social Worker to help you with lodging, food, and insurance while your child is in the hospital.
- ♥ Ask about a parking pass and/or meal coupons.
- ♥ Bring your camera/video camera.
- ♥ Bring a notebook and/or journal to write down questions and to help you remember daily events.
- ♥ Bring a calling card and your address/phone book.

- ♥ Bring Thank You cards to send out to people who are helping you in your time of need.
- ♥ Bring change for vending machines, magazines, books and parking.
- ♥ Bring sanitizer, antibacterial hand lotion, and chap stick.
- ♥ Bring Lysol wipes to wipe down strollers and toys.
- ♥ Bring toiletries and laundry soap to wash your clothes.
- ♥ Take a small cooler to keep your packed lunch/dinner/drinks at the bedside to cut down on meal costs.
- ♥ Some hospitals such as U of M offer free meals to nursing mothers. If you are interested, be sure to tell the nurse and have her bring you a menu to fill out.
- ♥ Bring Onesies or sleepers that button up the front and all the way down the leg so your child can wear their own clothing while still being connected to the monitors/IV's
- ♥ Take your baby's favorite toys, blanket's, books, and pacifiers.
- ♥ Take a cassette tape/CD/video of your child's favorite music or VHS.
- ♥ Take a portable DVD player with your child's favorite DVD's to play right at the bedside.
- ♥ Bring sticker books/coloring books.
- ♥ Bring their favorite band aids (Sesame Street, Dora, Blues Clues, etc...).
- ♥ Make a "photo mobile" of family members to hang above your child's bed or bring a photo album of family members for your child to look at while in the hospital.
- ♥ Give your child a haircut before going to the hospital or put little girl's long hair up in pony tails or braids the day of surgery.

After Hospitalization

- ♥ Contact your local EMS/Fire department and let them know you have a child with a cardiac condition. Make sure they are prepared for pediatric calls and have an AED (automated external defibrillator) available.
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