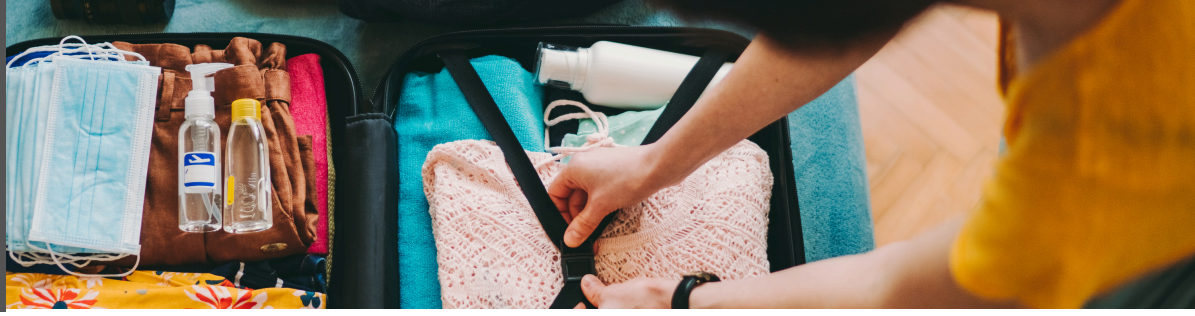
little mended hearts®

TO PARENTS FROM PARENTS



# TRANSITIONING FROM HOSPITAL TO HOME

The reality of bringing your child home from a hospital stay can be both exciting and terrifying. While your child was in the hospital, doctors and nurses were his or her primary caregivers. Once you've returned home, you are faced with taking over care, which can be very scary. Here are some things you can do to help you feel more at ease:

## EDUCATE YOURSELF ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S CONDITION

Before being discharged from the hospital, ask as many questions as necessary to get a solid understanding of your child's heart condition and any surgeries or procedures your child had and may need in the future. Learning about your child's condition will help you feel more confident and more in control when making decisions and managing your child's care. Ask your child's health care provider for a list of reliable resources you can use to learn more.

## LEARN FROM NURSES

In the hospital, nurses are at the bedside doing everything from changing diapers to providing life-saving care. When you get home, you'll take over some of the care they provide in the hospital, so don't be afraid to ask them to teach you things you need to learn. Nurses are a wonderful resource and are there to support you as you learn to care for your child as he or she gets ready to go home.

## KNOW WHAT TO DO IN AN EMERGENCY

Plan for the worst but expect the best. Start by learning cardio pulmonary resuscitation (CPR). As the parent or caregiver of a child with CHD, you'll probably be taught how to do CPR at the hospital. If you have not been taught before discharge, ask. Also, learn when you should call 911 or your child's doctor, and make an emergency plan. Go over that plan with your child's health care providers before you leave the hospital.

## UNDERSTAND YOUR CHILD'S EQUIPMENT

Your child may be discharged with no equipment other than a pacifier, or you may be sent home with an order for home health to provide you with equipment for your child. Make sure you understand what equipment you will be getting, what it is for and how to use it. If possible, get information in writing or have it emailed to you before you leave the hospital. Also make sure you have information about who to call if you have questions about the equipment or if it isn't working properly.

## LEARN ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S MEDICATION

If your child needs to take medication, find out what it does, how it works, what side effects may occur, how much he or she needs and when it should be given. Plan ahead and ask for prescriptions to be arranged and possibly filled before your child is discharged. Some prescriptions need to be compounded (made into liquid), and not every pharmacy is able to do this. Get help to find out which pharmacies can manage your child's medications. When you get home, the pharmacist will explain how to store the medications properly and help you understand medication instructions. Don't be afraid to ask questions.

*Bringing a child home from the hospital can feel scary. You can find more information and helpful tips for transitioning from hospital to home at* ***www.mendedlittlehearts.org.***

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