

MY PARENT IS IN HOSPITAL



MY NAME:

MY PARENT IN HOSPITAL IS MY:

THE HOSPITAL IS CALLED:

INFORMATION FOR CHILDREN AGED 7 - 11
WITH A PARENT IN A MENTAL HEALTH HOSPITAL

This is a leaflet for children who have a parent in a mental health hospital. So, if that's you...

HELLO!

We know when your parent is in hospital it can be worrying, even scary sometimes. You might have lots of questions and not know who you can talk to. We want to help you by giving you some facts.

It's a good idea to ask an adult to read this leaflet with you so you can ask questions as you go along.

Firstly, there are two important things to know:

1. You might not know anyone else with a parent in a mental health hospital, but you are not alone. There are many children in every country of the world in your situation.
2. Adults get ill and sometimes need to go to hospital for lots of different reasons, but it is never your fault.



WHY IS MY PARENT IN HOSPITAL?

Your parent is in hospital because they have a problem with their mental health. Another way of saying this is that they have a 'mental illness'. Lots of people have problems with their mental health and sometimes they need to go to hospital to get better.

WHAT IS MENTAL ILLNESS ?

Anyone can have a mental illness sometimes, just like with physical illness. Mental illness happens when our brain becomes unwell. Our brilliant brains control how we think and feel. So when our brain gets ill, it changes how we think and feel and so can change the things we do.

Mental illnesses have different causes and affect people in different ways. When people are unwell they might not be able to do normal things, like look after themselves or their family.

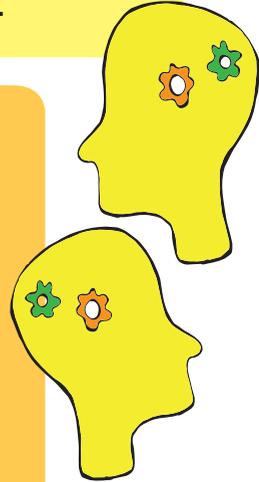
They might seem very sad (or 'depressed') and not be able to get out of bed.

They might seem too happy ('manic') or get angry more easily.

They might hear or see things that aren't there or believe things that aren't true.

Sometimes they may find it difficult to talk to you or they might not make sense when they're talking. This can all be frightening, for them and for you. Sometimes, when things are really bad, they need to go to hospital to stay safe and get better.

Remember that children can't cause mental illness. It is also not your job to make them feel better. That's our job in hospital!



COMING TO HOSPITAL

Sometimes when people are unwell they can become confused. They may not be able to think clearly enough to know that they need to come to hospital. When that happens, doctors and a social worker can write a special letter called a 'section', and then an ambulance will bring them into hospital safely.

Hospital wards are not all the same, but your parent will probably have their own bedroom and there will be a TV room and a dining room.

WHO IS IN HOSPITAL TO HELP ?



Nurses look after people in hospital by talking to them, helping them do things and giving them medicine to help them feel better.

Doctors know how our bodies and brains work and what to do when we get ill. Psychiatrists are doctors who know a lot about mental illness and medicines that can help.

Psychologists spend time talking with people to understand how they feel. This is sometimes called 'therapy' and it can help people feel better.

Occupational Therapists organise fun things to do on the ward, like cooking, art and music groups. They can also work out what help your parent needs when they leave hospital.

Adult Social Workers help people arrange things outside of the hospital. This might be sorting out where they live, finding support for them or organising who will help look after them at home. Children might have a social worker too whose job is to make sure that they are safe and looked after.

WHEN CAN I SEE MY PARENT ?

When your parent first goes into hospital, you may not be able to visit them straight away. If this happens, it doesn't mean they don't want to see you. It's because the doctors and nurses think they need to get a bit better first.

If you like, you could make them a get well soon card for an adult to send or take to them.

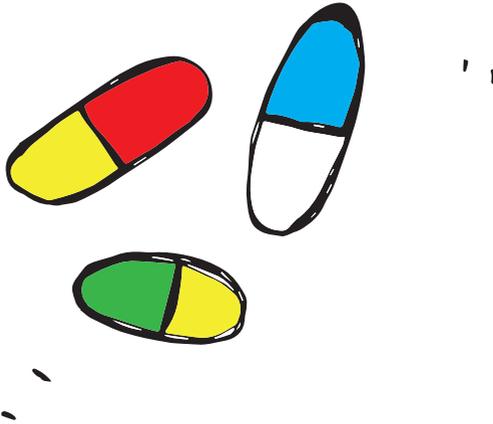
When your parent is starting to feel better, they can talk to you on the phone or you can visit. It's OK if you don't want to visit or speak to them yet. When you visit, they might not be better yet. Remember, getting better can take time.



WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THEY LEAVE HOSPITAL ?

When your parent leaves hospital they might need to carry on taking medication. They will probably see a doctor or nurse regularly.

If you moved out of your home when your parent went into hospital you may not be able to move back straight away. This is because it may take more time for things to get better. The adults helping your parent will make a plan.



WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I AM WORRIED ?

If you are worried, scared or upset, always speak to an adult you trust about how you are feeling. These feelings are normal. It's also important to look after yourself and remember to do things you enjoy like playing your favourite games or watching a movie.

HOW CAN I FIND OUT MORE ?

Don't be afraid to ask questions. You can ask a member of your family, an adult you trust, a teacher, a social worker or the adults helping your parent. They might not know all the answers, but hopefully they can help.

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 find out more, these websites have helpful information:

www.ourtime.org.uk 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.

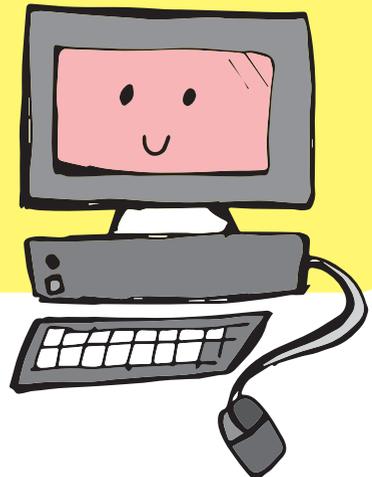
These websites are designed more for adults, but they still have lots of general information:

www.rethink.org

www.mind.org.uk

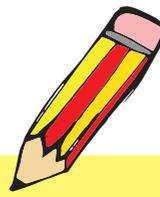
www.mentalhealth.org.uk

www.nhs.uk



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

MY NOTES



A large yellow rectangular area containing ten horizontal dashed lines, intended for writing notes.

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" – This one is for 7 to 11 year olds and the other is for those aged 11 and over.

Thanks to everyone who gave their time to write, design and comment on our leaflets including staff, patients and young people at South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust; Southwark Council's children and families service and the young people and adults at Our Time. Illustrations courtesy of Romayne Gadelrab.

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