

# Behavior changes in teens (12 years and older)

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Your teen may show changes in behavior during and after their hospital stay. As a parent, these changes may concern you. Please know that some of these changes are normal and most often go away with time. The changes listed below are normal behaviors for this age group.

## **This age group fears:**

- Changes in how they look and how their friends will see them.
- Parents and doctors are not telling the truth.
- Death and not waking up after surgery.
- Pain and waking up during surgery.
- Loss of control and privacy.

## **What changes could I see in my teen?**

Your teen may have one or more of these behaviors:

- Changes in:
  - How they feel about themselves
  - Time spent with friends
  - Sleep patterns
  - Eating habits
- Wants more attention
- Acts out (such as refuses to help or takes risks)
- Has concerns with how they look
- Does not want help
- Wants to be left alone

## **What can I do to help my teen?**

Here are some tips that may help you and your teen:

- Let them know when you will be with them.
- Give them time to be alone and time to hang out with friends.
- Give them time to ask you and the doctor questions. Involve them in planning and decision-making, if possible.
- Prepare them for any changes in how they may look.
- Let them talk with the doctor about ways to control pain.
- Let them tell you what they think will happen and how they feel.
- Support their feelings and let them know that they are normal.
- Set limits, and discipline your teen as you normally would once you go home.
- Return your teen to their normal routine as soon as possible.

**In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.**

# Behavior changes in teens, continued

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- Give your teen tasks that are equal to their abilities.
- Let your teen's teachers know about the hospital stay. This is so they can help your teen if behavior changes happen.
- Let your teen make choices about their daily routine and activities when possible.

Remember these changes in behaviors are common and most often go away. This is your teen's way of trying to cope with their hospital stay. If you have concerns or questions before you leave the hospital, please talk with a nurse, doctor or child life specialist.

**This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.**

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