

Let's Talk About...

Returning to School

While your child is in the hospital, your first concern is about medical care. However, addressing any school issues early will help make your child's return to school a bit easier.

What's the best way to talk to my child's school?

Communicating with your child's school may be as simple as talking with a teacher or counselor about absences and arranging for homework.

Primary Children's Hospital's education specialist can also help with school contacts and find school resources with your written permission.

What about school absences?

Students with medical issues often miss school. Your child may miss a few hours for medical appointments or several days if they're admitted to the hospital.

Tell the school when and how long your child will be out of school. Teachers are usually more understanding if you tell them as soon as possible.

Students are truant when they miss school or classes without a valid excuse. You can avoid truancy court problems or lowered grades by giving the school's attendance secretary documentation. A note from your child's doctor or the hospital is acceptable.

How do I help my child return to school?

To help your child go back to school:

- Develop a plan and classroom adjustments with your child's medical team and teachers before they return to school. Careful planning can help make the transition from hospital to school successful.

- Review your student's medical information and suggested activity restrictions with counselors, teachers, and the school nurse. Make sure they know how your child's health issues may affect their attendance and school performance.



What do I need to do next?

- 1 Write an individualized healthcare plan (IHP) with school staff.
- 2 Create a 504 plan or individualized education plan if your child needs one.
- 3 Have school staff evaluate your child for special services if needed.
- 4 Develop an emergency plan and give the school all emergency numbers.
- 5 Ask the doctor about safe play activities.

What about my teen with ongoing medical needs?

Your teen may have more trouble returning to middle school or high school. They may be expected to take care of their own medical needs at school and work with school staff when they need help.

Help your teen by making a plan for all classes. It is harder to make adjustments with each teacher.

How do I plan for my child's special health needs at school?

When your child needs more help with health needs at school:

- **Develop a written individualized healthcare plan (IHP) with the school nurse and your child's medical team.** The IHP identifies your child's specific health needs and the healthcare actions scheduled during school. This may include time during the school day to rest or take medicine, unlimited access to the restroom, or a shorter school day.
- **Create a 504 plan if your child needs extra help during their regular classes.** This plan protects children with disabilities and makes sure they have help at school. Each school and district should have a 504 coordinator to help you.
- **Have your child's teacher, school counselor, or principal evaluate them for special services.** They will review your child's medical and school histories. You may also need to discuss your child's medical condition and physical abilities. Once the school staff have evaluated your child, you'll meet with their teacher and other staff members to discuss services.
- **Write an individualized education plan (IEP) for special education services if your child qualifies.** This plan contains specific information about your child's academic goals and special education and services.
- **Decide on a plan to cover emergency medical needs at school.** Make sure your child's school has emergency numbers for their doctors (and for you) on file.
- **Ask their doctor about safe play.** Your child should take part in physical activities as much as possible if you and their medical team approve.
- **Arrange for someone to supervise your child if needed.** They may need someone to watch them on the playground and in congested school areas.



Where can I learn more?

Read more about IHPs, 504 plans, and IEPs at:

- Utahparentcenter.org/resources/school-services/
- Medicalhomeportal.org
- Understood.org/en/school-learning

What do I do about medicines at school?

If your child needs medicines or treatments at school:

- **Share the instructions from the medical team with school staff.** You should also include them in the individualized healthcare plan (IHP).
- **Decide where your child can store supplies at school.** This should be a safe place other students can't access.
- **Arrange for the school nurse or another healthcare provider to give your child medicine at school.** Most schools will not allow students to give themselves medicine there.
- **Teach your child to check the medicine dose each time before taking it.** They should also remind the school staff if medicines or treatments are late. Schools are busy places, and it's possible to make mistakes with doses or treatments.
- **Ask healthcare providers to help you update your child's student healthcare forms each year or when their medical needs change.** If your child changes medicines, you must give their school written information from the healthcare team to change the medicines they take at school.

What if my child is more tired at school?

A student may tire more easily when they return to school after a medical absence. Long school days can be hard, and your child may need scheduled rest breaks or shorter school days.

What kind of records should I keep for my child?

Keep copies of completed forms and letters, and make a binder with important information, including medical and school contacts, to take with you to appointments.

What should I tell the other students at my child's school?

Other students may have heard rumors or do not understand your child's illness. They often want to know if there is a name for the illness, "how you get it," and if they can "catch it."

To help prepare classmates before your child returns to school:

- Arrange a time in advance with your child's teacher to talk to your child's classmates (if you decide to).
- Consider having a social worker or child life specialist from the hospital visit your child's classroom to give information and answer questions about your child's health problems. They can help you explain complicated medical information in a way children understand.
- Provide brief information about your child's illness that's right for their age and development and explain how classmates can be helpful to your child.

Talking to your child's class and teacher can reduce fears and increase acceptance. The other students may have questions about where their friend has been or what they can do to help.

Remember: Teachers can only give classmates information about your child with your permission.

What if my child leaves the hospital but can't return to school?

If your child can't return to school, you may ask for homebound or home-hospital services with the school or school district so your child doesn't fall behind. A doctor or the hospital education specialist may contact school staff to start the process (with your written permission).

Each school district has rules about how long a student must be out of school before they begin homebound services. These services provide some teaching time at home, but less than are provided in the classroom.

A teacher may bring work to the student, briefly review material, collect completed homework, and assign homework for the next meeting. Students may be assigned online classwork instead of having a teacher come to their home.

What about services for young children?

Children younger than 3 years old with special healthcare needs may receive community-based services from state early intervention programs.

Children who are 3 to 5 years old may qualify for help with language development, physical and cognitive (thinking) skills, social skills, and adaptive strategies from local school districts.

What other resources can help me with school services?

For more resources to help your child return to school or receive special services, contact Primary Children's Hospital's school services team at 801-662-3777 or schoolzone@imail.org. Your child's school or school district websites are also good resources.



Questions for the doctor
