



WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I TURN 18?

What does turning 18 mean for me
and my health care?



Also see the **One Step at a Time** guide written by
Boston Children's Hospital's Teen Advisory Committee:
<http://bit.ly/onestep1>

When you're 18, state and federal law considers you a legal adult.

What does that mean for health care? It means that you'll be responsible for all decisions about your health care, including your treatment. Before you turn 18, it is your parent or caregiver/guardian's job to give permission for your treatment and to communicate with the care team. But on your 18th birthday, it becomes yours.

Some of your new responsibilities as an adult patient

- You will check yourself in, answer questions and sign forms.
- You will give your insurance information.
- Your health care team will talk with you directly about your plan of care and ask you for consent (permission).
- You will decide who will know about your medical situation, like your parents, employer, therapist or school. **If you would like to share information, you will sign a release of information that describes what you do and do not want to share—and who you want to share it with.** You can change your mind at any time.
- Your doctors and nurses will contact you directly with test results.
- Your health care team will give you instructions on things like medication, nutrition and what to do at home.
- It is up to you to make follow-up appointments and to make sure you come to them.

Getting ready to manage your own care

- It is normal to feel nervous about taking over these decisions. We want to help you prepare for this change. So as you get closer to turning 18, you may notice that staff and providers ask to meet with you alone for part of a visit. They may ask some questions privately.
- When checking in at your next appointment, make sure that you ask about updating the contact information in your medical record.
- It is a good idea to make sure you have your provider's contact information so you can be in touch directly.
- Make sure you have signed up to use your patient portal at mychildrens.org. All patients age 13 and older can have their own Patient Portal accounts, in addition to their parents having an

account. There are even some items that will not show up in your parents' account (sensitive information, like reproductive health questions or substance abuse treatment). When you turn 18, your parents automatically lose access to your Patient Portal account. You can decide to give your parent access to your Patient Portal when you turn 18.

Important things to know

- Advance care planning is what we call planning for future health care.
- One part of advance care planning is to **choose a health care proxy for any time when you are unable to make decisions about your care**, so you can get the care that you expect.
- Your health care proxy makes decisions for you in the short-term while you are unable to do so. For example, if you are under anesthesia (asleep) for a day procedure, you will not be able to consent to further treatment (you can be very sleepy and not able to think clearly).
- A health care proxy is called different things in different states, but the idea is the same—naming someone to make decisions when you cannot. Some useful resources are:

theconversationproject.org/starter-kits

Massachusetts Medical Society:
massmed.org/healthcareproxy

Important phone numbers at Boston Children's Hospital

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|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| • Main line | 617-355-6000 |
| • Hale Family Center for Families | 617-355-6279 |
| • Interpreter Services | 617-355-7198 |
| • Parking/handicapped parking | 617-355-6251 |
| • Patient Financial Services | 617-355-3397 |
| • Patient/family housing | 617-919-3450 |
| • Patient Relations | 617-355-7673 |
| • Public transportation | 617-222-3200 |
| • Social Work | 617-355-7965 |

Tips for managing your hospital visits

arrive early

Build in an extra travel time for traffic, parking and the check-in process.

take full advantage of your appointment

Ask questions while meeting with your health care provider. Also remember to ask for any instructions about anything you need to do after the appointment.

after the appointment

Write down notes and any other questions you have.

Before leaving, write down important numbers to call, like the clinic's nursing line, prescription refill line and appointment line.

When possible, make your follow-up appointment before you leave and write down new appointment dates.

ask for a medical release form

This form allows you to make your medical information available to someone else like your parent or guardian.

things to bring to the appointment



List of any allergies



Photo ID



Insurance card
(or insurance
information)



Any forms needed
to be filled out



List of questions
and/or notebook to
take notes



List of any
prescription
medications



Medical history
information (if
possible)



Something to pass
the time while
waiting (book,
iPad, etc.)