



## Growing Up, Gaining Independence: information for young people

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At Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) we want to encourage and support you to become as independent with your healthcare as you can be. Other young people have told us how important it is to have time to learn and practise new skills, and gradually to take on more responsibility. Once you have started secondary school is a good time to start thinking about some of the skills and knowledge you will need to manage your future health.

This information sheet tells you about some things to be aware of as you grow older, and a few suggestions to help you get ready for your future life. We have a separate information sheet for your family– they often have a lot of experience and knowledge they can pass on to you.

### Talking to healthcare professionals on your own

People told us that they find spending some time alone with their doctor or nurse really useful. It means you can talk about the things that matter most to you, ask your own questions and get to know the doctor or nurse better. You could start by spending a few minutes on your own, either at the beginning or the end of your appointment. What you say in the appointment stays private unless we are worried you are at risk.

*You should not feel that any question is too silly or too embarrassing to ask– if you want to know something, just ask. If you do not understand all of the answers ask them to explain again. We don't want you to leave an appointment with questions you wish you had asked or answers that you did not understand.*

### Legal and financial changes after your 16<sup>th</sup> birthday

Your 16<sup>th</sup> birthday may seem a long way off but there are important legal changes relating to your health that happen then. We need to make you aware of them so that you have plenty of time to get ready.

- **Consent** – After your 16<sup>th</sup> birthday you will be the one asked to decide about treatments or operations. This will involve signing a Consent Form. There's no need to do this on your own – you can still discuss your options with your family, doctors or nurses. There are special rules that apply if the doctors think someone cannot understand information well enough to make a decision on their own.
- **Hospital communications** – Once you are 16 years old, communications about your health should be addressed to you. This includes appointment letters, discharge summaries, clinic letters and test results. You can decide who can receive copies of letters or look at your medical notes after this age too.
- **Making appointments** – You will have to make appointments for yourself. Your parents will only be able to make, cancel or change your appointments if you have given the hospital permission for them to.

**Benefits** – If your family receives Disabled Living Allowance (DLA) on your behalf you may need to be re-assessed after you are 16 to see if you qualify for a Personal Independence Payment (PIP) instead. More details are available at [contact.org.uk/media/1163273/pip\\_guide.pdf](https://www.contact.org.uk/media/1163273/pip_guide.pdf) or you could contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB).

- **Record-keeping** – Once you are 16, health-related letters will start coming to you. You should keep copies of your clinic letters, as well as discharge summaries and test results. Talk to your family about

what they do with the letters they receive – how and where they file them, how they check the details in the letters are right, and what they do if something is not clear.

*Some people take a photo of letters and keep them in a secure folder on their phone so that they always have access to them. There are also apps available that allow you to securely store health information on a mobile or tablet.*

- **Medical history** – People often have some idea of their medical history but not in any detail. It is a good idea to keep a record of what immunisations you have had and when you had them; when you had any infectious diseases; and if you have had any operations or accidents when you were younger. It is also useful to find out if someone in your family has a medical condition or illness, especially one that needs treatment.

*Talk to your family about this. Your family doctor (GP) should be able to fill in any gaps. Think about how you will keep this record – you may need it when you apply for a job or if you go to university.*

- **Appointments** – Some young people told us that they rely on their parents to make appointments for them. Knowing what to ask; how to fit appointments in around holidays, exams and work, and how to keep track of them are important skills that everyone should learn. You will also need to know who to contact about an appointment in case you have to make, change or cancel it, or if you are running late – you could keep the details in your phone.

*Your parents can explain how they make appointments and keep track of dates. You could keep your own record of important dates such as holidays and appointments on the calendar on your phone.*

## Understanding your local health services

The age at which young people start attending adolescent or adult health services varies from area to area – in some places adult services start at 16 but in others at 18.

*Ask your family doctor's practice what happens in your local area. It is useful to know in advance whether you are likely to be seen in a children's department or an adult one if you need an appointment.*

## Any questions?

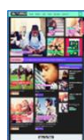
If you want to know more about the Growing Up, Gaining Independence programme at GOSH, please talk to your doctor or nurse, or anyone else in your healthcare team. More information is available at

[www.gosh.nhs.uk/your-hospital-visit/growing-gaining-independence](http://www.gosh.nhs.uk/your-hospital-visit/growing-gaining-independence)

## General health advice



**NHS GO**  
- a confidential health advice and information service.  
App available from Apple App store or Google Play



**Health for teens**  
-content and quizzes across all areas of health such as feelings, growing up, sexual health, your lifestyle, alcohol, and much more.  
[www.healthforteens.co.uk](http://www.healthforteens.co.uk)



**MeTwo**  
-an opportunity to anonymously share experiences and concerns. Offers peer support and expert advice on anything that might be on your mind.  
[www.meetwo.co.uk](http://www.meetwo.co.uk)



**Childline**  
-confidential advice and support on a wide range of issues. Call 0800 1111  
[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)