

## Transition for adolescents from paediatric health services to adult health services

As a young adolescent being seen at the Women's and Children's Hospital your son/daughter will need to transfer care by the age of 18 years to an adult health service. This process is called "transition". Ideally the transition process starts early and is planned and gradual. The aim is to help your adolescent become independent and responsible for their own health care as much as possible (dependent on their health needs and ability) and to help you understand what changes may occur over the next few years.

This is an important process for both you and your adolescent. It allows them to develop skills and knowledge to help them navigate the adult health service. This is also a time of change for you as a parent or carer as you begin to understand the differences between paediatric and adult services.

We recognise that all adolescents will have varying needs and abilities and their transition plans to adult services will take this into account. Whilst some adolescents will be supported towards complete independence, others may require ongoing support from family members or carers during this time. With the help of your health teams at the Women's and Children's Hospital, you will be supported through the transition process over a number of years.

### What does transition mean for parents, carers and adolescents?

Transition is a planned process where you and your adolescent will work with the medical, nursing and allied health teams to decide the most suitable adult health services for their care, and when the transition will occur. As a parent or carer your involvement in this process is very important, as you help support your adolescent through this change in care.

### When does transition start?

- > Transition should be a gradual process that starts from an early adolescence and continues over several years. Staff may start to talk to you about transition for your adolescent from 16 years of age, sometimes even earlier. This allows time for everyone to plan and adjust to a time when they will eventually take over as much responsibility for their own care as possible, dependent on their needs and abilities.
- > Usually transition is completed by the age of 18 years, however it is recommended that this occurs when your adolescent's health is stable and they are not going through lots of changes in their health care.

### How does adult healthcare differ from paediatric healthcare?

- > Adult healthcare teams will direct questions to your adolescent and they will be expected to have a good understanding of their health care, such as what medications they are on, their current treatments and health history (where possible). As a parent or carer you can play an important part in helping them to develop this understanding over the next few years.

In the paediatric hospital usually everyone your adolescent needs to see is in the one place. In adult services they may be required to see different teams for different areas of their health care. These may not always be at the same health service.

- > There may be extra costs involved, particularly around purchasing equipment. The team will be able to advise you on this.
- > An adult environment may feel very different to a paediatric hospital. To become familiar with the environment it is good to attend a visit to the new services close to the time of transition with your adolescent.

## What can I do to help my child prepare for transition?

- > At your next visit with the medical teams involved in your adolescent's care, start to talk to them about transition and what plans they will put in place for this to occur. This is the first step in an important part of them becoming a young adult and your healthcare teams will support you through this process.
- > Encourage your adolescent to become actively involved in their health care as much as possible. Share all your knowledge that you have built up over the years with them.
- > Encourage your adolescent to have more direct communication with their health team (where possible). You can also encourage them to talk to you and the health teams about any concerns they may have regarding transition.
- > It is important for your adolescent to have a GP that understands their health needs. This person will play an important role in their adult health care and often replace the role of their primary doctor in the paediatric setting. If your adolescent does not have a GP start to investigate who may be able to take on this role.
- > A staff member will be allocated as a coordinator for your adolescent's transition process. This will usually be someone from the team most involved in your adolescent's care.

Some of the things they may start to discuss with you could include:

- > your adolescent getting their own Medicare card
- > assisting with information about Centrelink allowances and getting a Health Care Card
- > adolescent resources to support them during transition
- > equipment needs and changes in the adult system
- > post school options.

## Who can I ask for more assistance?

You can ask any of your adolescent's treating teams to assist you with transition. This is the first step in an important part of them becoming a young adult and all staff involved in care will support you through this process.

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## For more information

**Ask any of the health teams involved in your adolescent's care**  
**[www.sahealth.sa.gov.au](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au)**

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