

# Getting Ready for Adult Healthcare

## WELL ON YOUR WAY

Youth in Transition Program

Although changes can be challenging, the time has come to say goodbye to your pediatric team and prepare for adult care. Knowing what you need before you leave and how things work in the adult healthcare system will make the transition easier. You are likely to have some questions, some of which will be answered here. If this doesn't answer all your questions, ask your healthcare provider.

### Will I still see a specialist when I am an adult?

As an adult you will still have special healthcare needs. You may find that you see your family doctor more than you did before transferring. Regular visits to your specialists are most likely still important to monitor your health status and to talk about what is working and what isn't as you plan for the future. Your family doctor will be the person to see with your general health concerns (e.g., annual check-up, health issues not related to your specialized care, like a sore throat or minor injury, etc.). If you don't have a family doctor, or if you aren't happy with your family doctor, now is the time to find another one.



### How will my care change?

The pediatric hospital has a different look and feel about it. The main difference is that you will take on the responsibility of managing your condition, setting up your own appointments—possibly at more than one location, and working together with your family doctor and your specialists. Your new adult specialist(s) will speak with you about your health. They will want to know who supports you to respect your need for confidentiality. If you want your parents or another support person to be with you for some part of your appointment you can talk about this with the adult medical team. They can help you work out what to do, but it is you who makes the final decision and signs the consent forms for treatment. Hopefully, you have already started to take on more responsibility in your treatment, understand your options, and can talk to your doctor about what works well and the challenges in following through with your treatment plan.

Keeping track of your information by writing it down or by getting copies is more important than ever. This will help you after you have left the pediatric clinic and are going to your adult appointments. It will also help the people that support you go over this information with you if they weren't with you at your appointment.

## Will my health insurance coverage change?

If you are a resident of Alberta, health insurance is free. It covers things like doctor's appointments and hospital stays. You should have your own card. Ask your parents if they also have private insurance. Some programs will cover you until you are 21, 25, or even longer, depending on your situation (in school or have a permanent disability).

If you are going to school or have a job find out what insurance they offer. Private insurance companies will ask about pre-existing conditions, which they may not cover. With group plans you may not have to pre-qualify for the benefits. These choices may replace your parents insurance or you might want to keep both to cover extra expenses. It is okay to have more than one insurance plan.

If none of these apply to you then you can buy private insurance, which may be subsidized, depending on your income. Ask your healthcare or the children's service provider for information about adult services to see what is best for you. Most programs take time to fill out the applications, so start early so there are no delays transferring these supports.

If you have been eligible for funding through community-based children's services such as Family Supports for Children with Disability (FSCD) you may be eligible for benefits through an adult program.

## What about my medications?

You need to keep track of the names and dosages of your medications and when you will need refills and/or a new prescription. Be sure you have enough medication from your last pediatric appointment until your appointment in the adult clinic. Speak with your new team about how you refill prescriptions. You can keep track of your medication and dosages with the MyHealth Passport ([www.sickkids.on.ca/myhealthpassport](http://www.sickkids.on.ca/myhealthpassport)). Or you can come up with a way that works for you.

## What if I move away to go to school?

Your pediatric team can help you to find a specialist in your new school's community. They will make a referral and send information about your care. If your specialist is in your school's community, ask your pediatric team where you should go when you are home for school breaks. Your pediatric team may suggest that you keep seeing an adult specialist when you are home. In this case, you would need to know where to get help in an emergency or urgent care situation when you are away from home. Don't wait until there is an emergency to find out what you should do. It is a good idea to have copies of your medical history and treatment plan (you can store it on a memory stick) and keep it with you.

## What if I get sick before my first appointment?

If you have not met your adult healthcare team and need to be seen right away, follow the instructions from your pediatric team. Your pediatric team usually keeps caring for you until you have been seen by the adult team. If you are already 18, ask about getting a letter from your pediatric team explaining your transition plan so you know what to do between the last time you see your pediatric team and the first time you see your adult team.

## What is the adult hospital like for inpatient care?

Adult hospitals do not have the same features as pediatric hospitals. You may have to rent a TV for your room. There are no Child Life staff that can bring you videos and computers. If you think you might be admitted, take some entertainment with you (like Sudoku or crossword puzzles, magazines, or a book). Check to see if you will have a locker so you can lock up your things. If you don't have a locker, it's a good idea to leave your iPod and other electronics at home.

## How can I plan to get to my new doctor's office?

There is always the bus! Check out routes at [www.calgarytransit.com](http://www.calgarytransit.com). For special transportation information you can check out the Transition Resource list at <http://fcrc.albertahealthservices.ca/transition>.

There usually is parking (go to [www.albertahealthservices.ca](http://www.albertahealthservices.ca) for a map if your clinic is at one of the hospitals). Remember, it often takes more time than you think to get from the car to the clinic. There is an Information Desk just inside the doors of the hospitals. Ask if you are not sure how to get to your new clinic. Let the clinic receptionist know when you get there.



## What should I bring to my appointments?

- ☐ A friend or family member if that will help you feel more comfortable.
- ☐ Provincial health care and other insurance cards.
- ☐ List of your current and/or recent health issues.
- ☐ Questions about your treatment, what is expected of you, and how treatment may change now.
- ☐ Paper and pen. You can ask the specialist/staff to help you write information down (e.g., new diagnosis, medications, or services).
- ☐ Summary of your medical information, medications, and when you will need refills.
- ☐ Copies of all your referrals, your transfer summary, and any other information your pediatric clinic staff gave you.
- ☐ The names/contact information for your family doctor and your other specialists (for the last three items think about using a memory stick or the MyHealth Passport).

## How do I get a new family doctor?

You can check the Transition Resources list (see the link above) or call Health Link Alberta at 403-943-LINK (5465). Ask friends if their doctor is accepting new patients. Check out doctors in your community that are taking new patients. If they are not taking patients, they may accept your name for a waitlist. You can be on as many waitlists as you wish.

For a list of doctors in Alberta that are accepting new patients, go to the College of Physicians and Surgeons in Alberta website at [www.cpsa.ab.ca/Homepage.aspx](http://www.cpsa.ab.ca/Homepage.aspx)

## Urgent Care Centres and Walk-In Clinics

If you need to be seen right away, you can go to your local urgent care centre or walk-in clinic (the resources above can tell you where the closest one to you is). Be sure to bring your health information with you. Try to go to the same clinic/care centre all the time until you have your own family doctor. Keep track of who you see and ask if you can see the same doctor next time. You may need to call ahead to find out the schedule. Walk-in clinics keep their own charts, so this will help the doctor know what your visits were about and if any treatments were given. Most importantly, go prepared with your own health information so the doctor understands your special healthcare needs.

## What else can I do to learn more about managing my health?

Talk to your doctors about working together to stay healthy or to improve your health. Think about taking part in information sessions on transition or workshops about becoming responsible for your own care.

## Who will be on my new healthcare team?



Healthcare Provider	Address	Phone No.	Appointment