

Adolescent transition: The basics for parents and carers



Adolescent Transition

Adolescent Transition Education Package | **Fact Sheet 1b**

An information sheet for parents and carers of patients transitioning from paediatric to adult health services

"A purposeful, planned process that addresses the medical, psychosocial and educational/vocational needs of adolescents and young adults with chronic physical and medical conditions as they move from child centred to adult-oriented healthcare systems"

Society of Adolescent Medicine 2003

Adolescent Transition is an important process for you as parents/carers to go through. As a parent/carer you have to cope with your own challenges as you encourage your child to look after their own healthcare and become more independent. Your involvement in your son/daughter's transition is important as it will help you to support them during this time of change.

We have developed some information and education modules on a range of topics that are also available on the RCH Transition website or from your child's clinical team. These modules are designed to help inform and support you and your child during this transition process.

Aims of transition

There are several aims of transition. These include:

- To provide high quality healthcare which is appropriate for your son/daughter's age, culture and development and is flexible, responsive and relevant to their needs and presented in a way they understand
- To help them develop skills in communication, decision-making, assertiveness and self-care, self-determination and self-advocacy
- To improve their sense of control and independence in regards to their healthcare
- To provide support and guidance for you as the parent/carer
- To maximise your son/daughter's capabilities to live well and achieve their goals regardless of their condition or disability
- To ensure you understand your changing role as a parent/carer

(adapted from McDonagh, 2003, 2005)

What does transition mean for the parents and carers?

Transition is an important process for you as a parent or carer of a young person who is stepping into adulthood. The transition process is helpful for parents/carers in working through the challenges faced, as well as enhancing your knowledge about your son/daughter's experience. It will help you cope with the changing of roles as you and your son/daughter move through this stage of their life.

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Transition phases

There are 4 general phases for an effective transition process.

Introductory/Planning Phase

[12–15 years approximately]

This phase involves introducing you and your son/daughter to the concept of transition, starting the information exchange, and an assessment of your child's knowledge of themselves, their medical condition and how to manage it. This is where you might want to think about how you can assist your child's growing independence during the preparation phase.

Preparation Phase

[15–18 years approximately]

This phase involves your son/daughter developing a transition plan, having a transition lead assigned to them (the person who helps manage the transition process), introduction to the concept of confidentiality and ensuring it is strictly adhered to. Correspondence will start to be addressed to your son/daughter rather than to you. It is important during this phase that if you have any concerns or queries about the process that you talk to your child's clinical team or transition lead as this is a process for you as well as your child.

Transfer Phase

[18–19 years]

This phase involves an assessment of how ready your son/daughter is to transfer, an information exchange between paediatric and adult services, providing you and your child with practical information about adult healthcare, and a process of allowing your son/daughter to write a letter of introduction to their new doctor. Your child will have their last visit with their paediatric medical team and will meet and start to have their appointments at their new adult health service.

Evaluation

[6–18 months post-transfer]

The phase involves follow up contact with you and your son/daughter, including the opportunity for written evaluation and feedback of your transition experience. This helps us to improve the transition process.

Transition challenges

Challenges can include:

- A changing role from managing your child's care to becoming more of a support and resource
- The potential to feel excluded or out of the loop as your child takes more ownership of their care

- Concern about your child's readiness to transfer to adult health services and growing independence
- Adjusting to adult health services and different processes and expectations
- Developing confidence in the new medical team

The parent/carer modules within the RCH Transition Program are very similar to that of the young person but with more of a focus on the changing role of the parent. The involvement of parents and carers in this process is highly important for the development of both the young person and their parent/carer.

The transition process will support and inform you as you:

- Encourage your son/daughter to take ownership of their health
- Step back into a consultation role instead of a management role
- Transfer your knowledge i.e. Medicare, healthcare, medical history
- Encourage direct communication between your son/daughter and the healthcare team

Your son/daughter will also face their own challenges which the transition process aims to help them overcome.

These may include:

- The children's service being familiar and comfortable
- Communication between services such as transferring health information
- Degree of participation/involvement in their healthcare for them and you as parents/carers
- Different health systems and different expectations
- Being independent and fitting the management of their health condition in with being a young person

Key points for parents and carers

- If you or your child doesn't get along with the new doctor, it is ok to request a second referral
- Transition is a natural step for a young person and is best achieved with your support and encouragement
- You and your child have the right to participate in the whole transition process
- Ensure that you are attending to your own needs during the transition process, self care is important when big changes are occurring

For more info contact:

The RCH Adolescent Transition Team on **9345 4858/4980**

or find email details and more info on **www.rch.org.au/transition**