

## **CARE IN HOSPITAL**

### ***Tips for Caring for Youth***

Adolescence is a time of change and transition. The body is changing, the emotions are fluctuating, the individual is no longer a child and is moving closer to becoming an adult. Best care of youth occurs when both the unit where the care is being provided and the staff providing the care, are sensitive to the unique developmental needs of the youth. Here are some tips on caring for youth.

#### ***Respect***

Strive to maintain the dignity of the youth :

- Knock before entering and wait for permission to enter before going in
- Introduce yourself and identify your role and the purpose of your visit
- Ask before sitting on the bed

#### ***Privacy***

Issues of privacy and personal space are very important to youth. We can support this by:

- Providing the youth with her/his own (safe) space
- Respect the youth's need for privacy, not only for day-to-day self care, but also for interview sessions, physical examinations and medical procedures

#### ***Confidentiality***

Adolescents need to know that their confidences will be kept by those they communicate with. To promote this caregivers need to:

- Maintain confidentiality between adolescents and yourself at all times, particularly with respect to family members (unless there is a clear intent to cause harm to self or others). The youth needs to know that private and personal information will not be given to anyone else without his/her knowledge and permission.
- Remember to keep patient discussions behind closed doors and remember that nursing stations do not have doors on them
- Provide clear information about rights and responsibilities of the youth including informed consent. Youth in most cases consent to their own health care

### ***Fostering independence***

As they move from childhood to adulthood, youth need support in becoming independent. Caregivers can encourage:

- Opportunities for self advocacy
- Opportunities for learning to be independent (e.g. taking own medications, booking own appointments)
- Learning about sexual health, nutrition, relationships and other relevant issues
- Opportunities for social support (peers, family friends)
- Access to educational and vocational planning
- Discussions about health and lifestyle choices

### ***Flexibility in care***

Gaining a sense of control over their lives is a critical task for youth.

Caregivers can contribute to this by:

- Providing choices for the youth according to the youth's maturity level
- Fostering a consistent approach with the youth
- Supporting flexible visiting policies
- Sensitivity to the timing of medications.
- Negotiating bedtimes with the youth rather than dictating
- Supporting the youth in getting school work done in the time frame the youth lays out for it
- Informing, monitoring and supporting the youth's right to say she/he does not want to have numerous consultants in the same room at once
- Informing youth that they have the right to refuse to be seen by students
- Preparing both the youth and the staff prior to contact with each other
- Ensuring that staff are oriented to the unit and to the considerations that should be kept in mind in working with youth

### ***Good communication/Giving youth a voice***

As they move towards independence it is imperative that youth feel heard and that their opinions are respected. Staff can support youth by:

- Getting to know the youth and developing a trusting relationship with them - "I'm more than my illness"
- Providing opportunities for the youth to say what they need
- Listening respectfully to the youths' ideas about their health care

- Answering questions whenever a youth asks them
- Seriously and respectfully considering a youth's opinion when a decision is to be made about her/his health care
- Developing patience, empathy and creating open opportunities for sharing
- Actively involving youths in appropriate team meetings regarding planning or implementing their care

### ***Youth friendly spaces***

Peers are incredibly important to youths. A dedicated space offers youth an essential opportunity for socialization and mutual support. Staff can support a youth friendly environment by:

- Letting youth know when there are other youth nearby and encouraging their meeting
- Providing an opportunity for the youths to access the phone, internet, or email
- Letting them play their own type of music
- Allowing them to bring in their own reading material
- Ensuring there are curtains around the youths' beds for privacy
- Letting others stay overnight when appropriate
- Encouraging the youth to seek out the teen lounge or schoolroom
- Providing a private bathroom whenever possible
- Respecting their personal space, storage area and bulletin boards
- Providing access to mirrors
- Providing access to outdoors
- Ensuring that any rules, rights, expectations are clearly posted for easy access
- Ensuring that a feedback box is available for youth to give suggestions

### ***Dress Code***

Youth need to feel that they are the same as their peers; that they do not stand out. In addition, choice of clothing helps to normalize a hospital experience. Staff can acknowledge these needs by:

- Encouraging youths to wear their own street clothes, pajamas, and robes
- Wearing casual clothes when working with the youth and having identification tags obviously placed so that youth can clearly see your name and title