



Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children NHS Foundation Trust: Information for Families

Welcome to the high dependency unit (HDU) on Sky Ward

This information sheet explains about the high dependency unit (HDU) on Sky Ward at Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH), what to expect when your child stays and what happens when your child no longer needs high dependency care. If you have any questions before your child's admission, please contact the Spinal or Orthopaedic Clinical Nurse Specialists. If you have any questions during your child's stay, please discuss these with a member of ward staff.

What is the high dependency unit (HDU)?

The high dependency unit (HDU) is a self-contained four-bedded bay on Sky Ward. Sky Ward is mainly for children and young people who have had spinal or orthopaedic surgery but we also nurse children having other types of operations. It is located on level 6 of the Octav Botnar Wing (OBW). The aim of the HDU is to offer closer monitoring and nursing to children who have had complex or major surgery. It acts as an intermediate or 'step down' between our intensive care units and wards.

Why might my child need to stay in the HDU?

There are many reasons why your child might need to stay in HDU:

- Your child may have had a complex or major surgical procedure which may mean they need closer monitoring for a while after the operation.
- Sometimes, before a complex or major operation, your child may have a short stay in HDU as a precautionary measure, especially if they have particular health issues or risk factors.
- Children and young people who have an artificial airway, such as a tracheostomy, or are using breathing support such as CPAP or BiPAP at home, may need closer monitoring after the anaesthetic and for the rest of their stay.
- If your child is already staying on Sky Ward, they may need to be transferred to the HDU if they become unwell and need closer monitoring.

We will explain the particular reasons why we think your child will benefit from a stay on HDU.



How long will my child stay in HDU?

The aim of the HDU is to be a 'stepping stone' back to Sky Ward. Most children leave HDU and finish their recovery on Sky Ward before being discharged home. In some cases, only one night in HDU is needed after an operation, but in others, particularly after complex or major surgery, children may need to stay a number of nights in HDU. Each day, the ward team will assess each child in the HDU to review whether they still need closer monitoring or whether they could be transferred to the main ward. Occasionally, children may be transferred from the HDU to our Paediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) if they become unwell or require more help with their breathing, for instance.

Who will be looking after my child?

Nurses from Sky Ward also nurse children in the HDU so you will see some familiar faces. They have had specialist training in high dependency care and experience in intensive care. Your child will still be under the same surgical and medical teams as previously, who will continue to visit and oversee your child's treatment.

There will also be at least two nurses to look after children in the four-bedded bay. On each shift (day and night), there will be a Nurse in Charge who is responsible for the entire ward including the HDU. In addition, the HDU has a team leader for each shift who will monitor every child's care.

Can I help to look after my child in the HDU?

We encourage you to take part in your child's care as much as you feel able. Talk to your child's nurse about what you would like to do, such as washing and feeding. As long as it is safe for you to do so, you should be able to help the nurses look after your child.

Please keep the curtains around the bed space open so that the nurses can monitor your child at all times. You can, of course, close the curtains for short periods while your child is washing or having a procedure.

Can my child have visitors?

Parents can visit at any time but visiting times for other relatives and friends are between 9am and 8pm. As space is limited and the nurses need to be able to access your child, we ask that only two parents and two other visitors are at the bedside at any time. You are welcome to bring brothers and sisters to visit, but remember that you must supervise them at all times.

We are working hard to reduce the risk of infection so we ask that you and your visitors take off your coats before visiting and hang them outside the area. There is a sink on the left as you come into HDU, so please wash your hands and use alcohol gel before you see your child and ask your visitors to do the same.

If you or any visitor has been in contact with coughs, colds, tummy bugs, chicken pox or measles, we would prefer you to wait until you are better before visiting.



Can I sleep by the bedside?

We recognise that having a child in HDU can be stressful and you want to be near them at all times. However, we strongly advise parents to sleep in accommodation at night so you can rest and be refreshed to be with your child during the day. We will contact you immediately if your child's condition changes at all so please do not feel you have to stay with them 24 hours a day. When your child is admitted, we will help to arrange accommodation for both parents. Please be aware that when your child leaves HDU, we can only accommodate one parent.

Can my child have a single room?

Children needing high dependency care need closer monitoring so we cannot nurse them in a single room unless they are at risk of infection or have an infection. The HDU is a four-bedded bay, so there may be a mix of ages and genders being nursed together, but we do the utmost to protect the privacy and dignity of your child at all times during their stay at GOSH.

When your child has left HDU, they will be allocated a bed space according to how their physical, psychological and social needs are best met taking into consideration the needs of other children and young people on the ward at that time. Please tell us if your child has a preference for being with other children of their own age or gender and we will try to meet this request where possible. The single rooms on Sky Ward are prioritised for children at risk of infection or with an infection or small babies.

Can I bring toys and games for my child?

You are welcome to bring in a favourite toy or game for your child so long as it does not take up too much space and stop the nurses caring for your child. There is a television by each bed and DVD players, games consoles and computers can be lent to your child by the ward play team. You will be allocated a small locker outside the HDU area to store any valuables although please note that GOSH cannot accept any liability for damage to or loss of any personal property.

What else should I bring?

Please limit the amount of clothes, wash things and personal belongings that you bring as space is quite limited in the HDU – there is only room for one small suitcase by the bedside. If your child uses equipment such as a CPAP or BiPAP machine or a feeding pump at home, please bring them with you. If you have any additional equipment at home, please discuss this with us before you come to the ward.



What happens when my child leaves HDU?

Once the team has decided that your child is ready to leave HDU and transfer to Sky Ward for the rest of your stay, we will let you know. The actual transfer is only a short distance and the same nurses and doctors will be looking after your child for the rest of their stay. There will be fewer nurses looking after your child, but

they will, of course, continue to monitor your child's recovery along with other children and young people on the ward. Please remember that once your child has left HDU, we can only accommodate one parent but we can supply details of local hotels if you both want to stay close to the hospital.

**If you have any questions,
please telephone Sky Ward on 020 7829 8806 or 020 7829 8807**

Notes

Compiled by Sky Ward in collaboration with the Child and Family Information Group

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