

Transitioning to Adult Healthcare

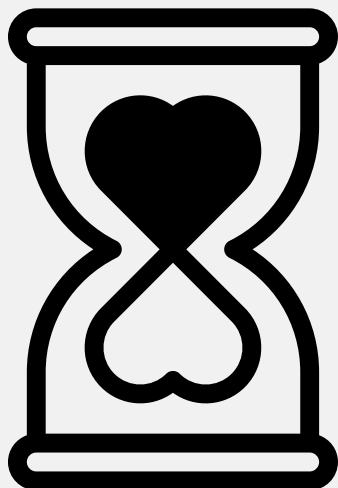
When you turn age 18, you become the decision-maker for your healthcare. If you have been seeing a doctor who treats children, you may need to switch to a doctor who treats adults. It is a good idea to start getting ready for this change before you turn 18. Moving to an adult doctor is a big step and means you have to be more independent and take care of yourself. You can still ask your family or caregivers for help, but you are the one in charge.

How Do You Know You Are Ready?

Changing from children's healthcare to adult healthcare usually happens between ages 18 and 22. It is a good idea to start learning and practicing the new responsibilities before you make the switch. You can also choose people you trust to help you with these tasks.

You are ready if you can:

- Understand your health conditions and health history and can explain them to someone else.
- Know when and how to get emergency care like going to the emergency room or urgent care.
- Manage your medications.
- Make and cancel doctor's appointments.
- Talk with your doctor about your health.
- Know what health insurance you have.



How is Adult Healthcare Different from Children's Healthcare?

Some of the things that may change when you move to adult healthcare are:



Children's
Healthcare



Adult
Healthcare

Your parent or caregiver is with you for most or all your appointments.



You see the doctor alone unless you want others to be there.

Your parent or caregiver helps answer questions and explain your medical conditions, any medicines, and medical history.



You answer questions and explain your medical conditions, medicines, and medical history. You can ask someone to help you with this.

Your parent or caregiver helps make appointments and get your medicines.



You make your own appointments, get your medicines on your own, and take your medicines on your own. You can ask someone to help you with this.

Your parent or caregiver can see some of your health information, including test results.



Your health information is private unless you agree to let others see it.

Your parent or caregiver knows your health insurance and pays any charges at the appointment.



You keep your health insurance card with you and pay any charges at the appointment.

Your parent or caregiver keeps a record of your medicines and vaccines.



You keep a record of your medicines and vaccines.

Many children's doctors provide primary care and specialize in things like asthma and heart conditions.



Adult specialists often do not provide primary care, so you need to have a primary care doctor along with a doctor who specializes in things like asthma and heart conditions, if needed.

Supporting You in Adult Healthcare



When you turn 18, you are legally an adult. You make your own choices about your healthcare unless you choose to involve others. Your health information is private unless you decide to share it.

Here are some options to consider:

Privacy Release Form: Lets a person or people you choose see your medical records and talk with your doctors. This is sometimes called a HIPAA Release Form. You can find a copy of this form at the [NC-DHHS](#) website.

Supported Decision-Making Plan: Choose people you trust to help you understand your choices and make good decisions about your symptoms, conditions, and health care.

Healthcare Power of Attorney (H-POA): A legal document that lets someone you choose make healthcare choices for you, but only if you are no longer able to make healthcare decisions for yourself. It says what kind of healthcare you want and helps your H-POA make the same decisions about your health that you would. You cannot set up this document once you can no longer express your wishes, so if you want this document, it is recommended that you obtain it soon after you reach age 18.

Living Will or Advance Directive: A legal document that lets you say what kind of care you want at the end of your life if you are unable to make healthcare decisions or communicate those decisions. This care includes measures like CPR or shocking your heart to keep you alive. It can also include food and water delivered to your body through tubes if you are unable to eat or drink. It is important to tell your family or friends what you want at the end of your life. Without it, family members and doctors may not know your wishes.

You can find information about these and other Less Restrictive Alternatives at the [Rethinking Guardianship NC](#) website.

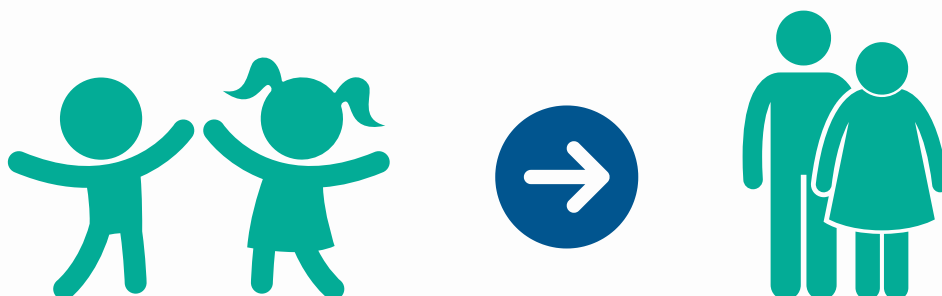
Other Resources

You can find many useful tools and information about transitioning to adult healthcare at the [Got Transition](#) website. For example, you can take this [Got Transition Readiness Quiz](#).

You can find information and worksheets to learn about adult healthcare in this [ASAN Healthcare Toolkit](#) by AASPIRE.

The Center for Inclusive Health offers this [Toolkit for Primary Care Providers](#) that you can share with your healthcare providers.

You can create a personalized checklist of steps to take for your healthcare transition at Work Together NC's [Transition Action Planning Resources](#) website.



Get Started with Transitioning to Adult Healthcare

Step 1. Take the “Got Transition Readiness Quiz.”

Step 2. Talk to people you trust, such as your family or doctor, about changing to adult healthcare.

Step 3. Learn about your health insurance.

Step 4. Identify some adult healthcare providers near you and visit their office, talk to their staff, and decide if you like them.

Step 5. After you turn 18, you can ask your child doctor to send your healthcare records to your new, adult doctor.