



## Special Visit Guidelines & Request Packet

Special Visits are visits that provide a welcomed diversionary entertainment-like appeal to our patients. This may range from professional athletic teams, theatre troupes, and other child-appropriate celebrity figures. These visits may include a performance, signing of autographs, and/or art activities. Special visit requests are reviewed upon receipt and are responded to in three to four business days. All requests should be submitted 6 – 8 weeks in advance of your proposed visit.

To ensure a successful visit, please review these following items.

### Important Notes

Thank you for your interest in visiting our patients at Rady Children's Hospital. In light of the flu season and the condition of our patients, all interested visitors must receive both the flu and H1N1 vaccine. Written documentation of receiving these vaccines must be submitted with the Special Visit application packet. This is a precautionary measure for our patients, our staff, and our community. All requests for visits must be submitted 6- 8 weeks prior to date of request and are subject to change depending upon the condition of our patients.

- ◆ All special visit visitors must be at least 18 years of age.
- ◆ Visits must not contain elements of violence, weapons, or suggestion of physical harm or death
- ◆ Cell phones can interfere with medical equipment and must be turned off while inside the hospital.
- ◆ Private cameras or video cameras are strictly prohibited.
- ◆ Visitors wearing/in costume must discuss costume selection with our Child Life staff prior to visit.
- ◆ Scheduled visitors with cold and/or flu symptoms are not permitted in the hospital.
- ◆ Food, candy and flowers are not allowed and cannot be distributed to patients.
- ◆ Give-away items (teddy bears, autographs, stickers, etc.) are greatly appreciated by both patients and their siblings. We have over two hundred 248 beds at the hospital. It is greatly encouraged that if your group is bringing items, to bring enough for the entire hospital. We have many kids that travel to different departments while under our care and it is our goal to distribute items equally and fairly to all children.

Therefore we request that **all giveaway items are discussed with staff prior to visit.** When we received items fewer than the children we have in our care, donated items will be distributed by the Child Life staff immediately following the visit. Other items such as electronic games and DVDS, are used through our check-out system so that all children may benefit from these type of donations.

- ◆ Please plan to arrive on time and be flexible during your visit. When a special visit is planned, staff is informed and prepares our patients for your arrival. With this, comes a great level of excitement and to ensure all children are seen and can take part in your visit, we ask you to be on time. Many of our special visits occur during and in between medical appointments and procedures that have been pre-determined. It is our hope every child will be able to participate.
- ◆ All visitors must review and sign each page of the Special Visit Guidelines prior to review of their special visit request. Visitors that do not adhere to these guidelines will be asked to leave.



## **WHAT TO DO:**

**Stay with your guide and follow their lead.** Not every child will feel up to a visit. Let the Child Life Specialist introduce you first and never go into a room until a hospital staff member has given you the go-ahead.

**Introduce yourself!** You can break the ice by telling a child your name and affiliation (your sports team, musical group, etc.)

**Smile!** A smile is contagious and friendly.

**Crouch down to the child's level.** It can be scary to have adult strangers towering over you. Crouch down to meet a child, especially a child in a bed or wheelchair.

**Remember to include the siblings.** Having a brother or sister hospitalized can be traumatic for the siblings, too. Your special visit is designed for patients and siblings; please remember to include them.

**Ask general interest questions or questions that relate to the visit.** “Do you like sports?” “Who is your favorite player?” “Do you have any hobbies?” “Does your bear have a name?” Friendly questions can help make the patients feel more relaxed. If there is time, let the patient know that you can answer any of the questions he or she might have about you.

**Thank a child for letting you visit.**

**End the visit with a positive note:** “Nice to meet you.” “Have a great day!” “Thanks for letting me visit,” and “Take Care” are all good things to say at the end of a visit.

**Obey the guidelines.** A hospital visit is different from a school visit or other public appearance; please follow our guidelines.



## **WHAT TO AVOID:**

**Going off on your own.** Let us be your guide and introduce you to the patients.

**Asking a patient why they are in the hospital or using adult or medical humor.** Your special visit is a chance for kids to forget about being in the hospital. Besides, a variety of things could have brought a child to a hospital, and it may not be comfortable or appropriate for a child to talk about those reasons. Please respect their privacy.

**Saying “Get well soon.”** Again, your visit is a chance for them to forget about being in the hospital. You also may meet children with chronic conditions who are struggling with their illness. “Take care,” “Have a nice day,” “It was great to meet you,” are excellent ways to end the visit instead of saying “Get well soon.”

**Making promises you cannot keep.** Kids have a hard time distinguishing between something said in jest and a true promise. They can be very literal. If you say to a child “see you at the game,” they believe you intend to visit with them at the game! The same is true for an innocent statement like “see you later.” Please also be mindful not to make promises or offers you may not be able to fulfill.

**Talking about your own hospital experience.** We like to use special visits as an opportunity for a child to forget about why they are in the hospital. In addition, your experience with an illness or injury, no matter how similar it might seem, is not the same; every child’s case is an individual matter.

**Making a religious reference, such as “God will heal you.”** Faith is a powerful tool when coping with illness and injury, however, it is also a very individual matter. Comments about divine healing can be confusing and inappropriate to a child coping with illness.

**Making assumptions about a child’s gender or age.** Hospitalized patients can regress, acting younger than they are. It may also be difficult to know if a patient is a boy or a girl. Your guide should introduce you, and when in doubt ask the hospital staff.

**Scolding a patient for his or her mood or behavior.** Children in the hospital are under great physical and emotional stress. As a result, they might regress and act younger, they might “act out” being boisterous or aggressive, or they might become shy and withdrawn. Comments such as “be a big boy” or “don’t be shy” are inappropriate. To a patient, these comments can feel like added pressure, causing a patient to feel embarrassed or feel lowered self-esteem.