Ways of helping you to relax:

- If your child is in hospital, have short breaks from the ward. Perhaps friends or family can keep your child company.

- Build in some time for yourself, even just to watch TV.

- Light physical exercise, such as going for a short walk, can help you to relax. Music that you enjoy or find soothing can also be relaxing.

- Relaxation exercises can teach you to relax the muscles in your body.

- If you are feeling particularly stressed, try taking slow, deep breaths for a few minutes to help you feel calmer.

Department of Clinical Psychology

Clinical Psychologists help with a range of emotional and behavioural difficulties that children, young people and their families coming to hospital and living with illness may experience.

Please discuss with your consultant or nurse specialist in the first instance if you would like to see one of our team.

You may also contact:

Action for Sick Children Scotland
Telephone: 0131 553 6553
Website: [www.ascscotland.org.uk](http://www.ascscotland.org.uk)
E-mail: enquiries@ascscotland.org.uk

Or drop into the Family Support and Information Service who are based at the main reception of Royal Hospital for Sick Children, Yorkhill, Glasgow.

Tel: 0141 201 0736/0707 Page: 8081 or 8151
E-mail: family.information@ggc.scot.nhs.uk

Another website for advice on mood and anxiety is [www.glasgowsteps.com](http://www.glasgowsteps.com)
Parents react differently when their child becomes chronically or acutely unwell. This can depend on your individual personality, the support available and the type and severity of health problems that your child has. However, most parents will experience some stress at this time.

This leaflet describes some of the pressures on parents and families when a child is unwell and ways to cope with these difficulties. It also includes ways to help you to relax.

**Common difficulties for parents and families when a child or young person is unwell include:**

- Finding it hard to relax and feeling tense.
- Finding it hard to be positive about the future.
- Problems in relationship with partner, such as arguments as a result of you both being tired and stressed.
- Money worries.
- Time off work (not being given enough or taking too much).
- Brothers and sisters displaying behaviour problems as the parent is busy coping with the sick child.
- Worries about your child who is unwell.
- Distress at seeing your child unwell and undergoing medical treatment.
- Having to be the strong person, with little support for yourself.
- Uncertainty about medical language and its implications.
- Managing the physical aspects of caring for your child.

**Strategies to help you cope:**

- Try and decide how much information and support you want.
- As much as possible, aim to keep the family and yourself in a routine.
- If possible, arrange practical support so that friends and family help to let you deal with more urgent matters.
- If you have questions, please ask the staff. There is no such thing as a silly question. It often helps to write questions down.
- To help you deal with your own feelings, try writing them down or talking to someone you trust.
- Ask medical staff about support groups for parents or charitable organisations. There are services in the hospital such as the Family Support Service or the chaplaincy that can also help.
- Sometimes it is best to live one day at a time. Set small goals that can be easily met.