YOUR CRISIS GUIDE

The First 72 Hours

What to do first

Free guide from yourcrisisguide.com

For the most up-to-date version, visit:

https://yourcrisisguide.com/first-72-hours/

This printed copy can go out of date. Always check the website for the newest version.

Scan to open the latest version of this guide on your phone.

What you need to know first

Right now, you only need to handle the next few steps, not everything. This is the short list of what matters in the first three days. Take it one step at a time.

Programs change. This printed copy can go out of date. Check yourcrisisguide.com for the latest info, and use this page: https://yourcrisisguide.com/first-72-hours/

Use the boxes to check off what you have done. Use the notes pages to write down names, numbers, and what people told you. Every website mentioned here is printed as a full address, so you can type it if you are not using a QR code.

When the first three days are behind you, go next to the First 10 Days plan. That plan has the day-by-day calls, forms, scripts, and its own printable booklet. This booklet does not repeat that material.

Next: the First 10 Days plan
https://yourcrisisguide.com/first-10-days-action-plan/

What this guide can and can't do

This booklet helps you know what to do first, whom to call, and what can wait. It is not medical, legal, financial, or tax advice. Your care team, your insurer, your employer, and each program decide what applies to you. If a deadline is not listed here from an official source, do the step as soon as you can.

If a link here is out of date, tell us at https://yourcrisisguide.com/contact/ so we can fix it for the next family.

Our key contacts

Write down the names and numbers your team gives you. Leave a line blank if it does not apply. Do not put account passwords or other private logins here.

Care team / main point of contact

Name / role _____

Phone or email _____

After-hours or on-call number

Number _____

When to call _____

Hospital social worker

Name _____

Phone or email _____

Hospital financial counselor

Name _____

Phone or email _____

Insurance case manager

Name / plan or member services _____

Phone or email _____

Case or member number _____

HR or manager

Name _____

Phone or email _____

In the first few hours

- [ ] Breathe. You don't have to make every decision today.
- [ ] Bring someone with you to appointments. A second set of ears helps.
- [ ] Start a notebook (or a notes app). Make it your diary. Write down names, what the doctors say, and questions as they come. Keep track of medicine, reactions, etc.
- [ ] Start a folder for paperwork: every form, every business card. You may need multiple folders. Stay as organized as you can.

The next page is for those first names, questions, and what you were told.

Notes: the first few hours

Who is with me at appointments

Name _____

Phone _____

Where I am keeping notes and paperwork

Notebook, app, or folder _____

Where it lives _____

What the doctors said / my questions

Get the essentials from your care team

- [ ] Ask for the diagnosis and the care plan in writing. You will want to review this when you can and refer to it in the future.
- [ ] Get your care team's names and the after-hours / urgent phone number.
- [ ] Ask: "Who is our main point of contact?"
- [ ] Ask what counts as an emergency, and what can wait until morning.
- [ ] Ask what to expect in the next 24 hours, 3 days, week, etc.
- [ ] Ask: "What tests or procedures are planned in the next few days, and is there anything we need to do to prepare?"
- [ ] Ask: "Is there a child life specialist who can help our child get ready?" See what child life specialists do and what to ask for, at https://yourcrisisguide.com/child-life-specialists/.
- [ ] Ask: "Can one of us stay overnight, and if so, what are the options?"
- [ ] Ask: "Is it OK with you if we take notes or record this on a phone, so we can go over it later?"
- [ ] Ask: "Is there a hospital social worker we can talk to, and someone who can help with cost and insurance questions?"

Notes: care team

Diagnosis and care plan in writing

Who I asked / date _____

Where I filed the paper or message _____

Main point of contact

Name _____

Phone _____

What counts as an emergency / what can wait

_____

_____

Tests or procedures in the next few days

What is planned _____

How to prepare _____

_____

Child life specialist

Name / how to ask _____

Overnight stay

What they said _____

Notes or recording

What they said is OK _____

Three calls to make when you can

- [ ] **1. The hospital social worker.** Many hospitals send a social worker to new families in the first day or two. If no one has come by, ask your nurse to page them. You're allowed to ask. They can tell you what help is available at your hospital, such as parking, meals, and a place to stay, and point you to programs outside it. At some hospitals a nurse navigator or care coordinator is the first person who reaches out. If so, start with them.

Say this

> "*Our child was just diagnosed. What help can you set up for us?*"

- [ ] **2. Your insurer.** Call the member services number on the back of the card. Say your child has a new serious diagnosis. Ask what is covered, whether anything needs pre-approval, and whether they can assign a case manager. Ask on the first call, even if it takes a while to get assigned. Some plans set one up right away, and others take a few weeks. Asking early starts the clock. Write down the date, the time, and the name of the person you spoke to.

- [ ] **3. Your employer.** Tell HR or your manager. Share only what you are comfortable sharing. You do not have to give them the diagnosis.

Say this

> "*My child is in the hospital. I need to be out this week, and I would like to know what leave or flexibility is available.*"

Notes: the three calls

Social worker (or nurse navigator / care coordinator)

Name _____

Date / time I asked _____

What they can set up _____

Insurer / case manager

Plan / member services number _____

Date, time, and who I spoke to _____

Pre-approval or case manager _____

Employer / HR

Who I told _____

Date _____

Leave or flexibility they mentioned _____

One line per call if you need more room.

Date	Whom I called	Reference no.	What they said	Next step

Tell only who you need to

- [ ] Pick one person who you can trust to update family and friends, so you're not repeating the hardest news over and over.
- [ ] It's okay to keep your circle small right now.
- [ ] Keep your phone on "do not disturb" as much as you can. This is YOUR time and people have to respect that.

Protect your job and income (this week)

- [ ] Ask about leave options; FMLA and paid family leave may apply. See Employment Help, at https://yourcrisisguide.com/employment-help/.
- [ ] If applicable, ask to work remotely until further notice.

For the calls, forms, and scripts about leave in the first 10 days, go to the First 10 Days plan rather than repeating that work here. Next: the First 10 Days plan, at https://yourcrisisguide.com/first-10-days-action-plan/.

Notes: work and who to tell

The one person who can update family and friends

Name _____

Phone _____

What I asked them to share _____

Job and leave

Who I asked about leave _____

FMLA or paid family leave, if they mentioned it _____

Remote work or schedule _____

Next step / forms _____

Anything else I need to remember this week

Insurance and money (this week)

- [ ] Start a bills folder. Don't rush to pay anything you're unsure about. Actually, don't pay anything right now as most bills will be incorrect. More on this later.
- [ ] Real help exists for treatment costs, housing, and utilities. See Financial, at https://yourcrisisguide.com/financial-resources/; Government Assistance, at https://yourcrisisguide.com/government-assistance/; and Housing, at https://yourcrisisguide.com/housing-assistance/.
- [ ] Don't jump to make drastic changes right now, this is the first 72 hours. See what lies ahead and act accordingly.

Take care of yourself

- [ ] Eat something. Sleep when you can. Accept help when it's offered.
- [ ] Caring for yourself is part of caring for them.

What can wait

Almost everything else. You'll get to it. One step at a time.

Notes: bills and this week

Bills folder

Where I am keeping bills and EOBs _____

Help I was pointed to

Treatment costs / financial help _____

Housing or a place to stay _____

Utilities _____

Who told me / next step _____

Taking care of myself

Who offered help I can accept _____

What I am letting wait

What's next

When the first three days are behind you, Your First Week checklist covers the calls, forms, and people that often help most later.
https://yourcrisisguide.com/first-week-checklist/

The Glossary explains the words you will start hearing.
https://yourcrisisguide.com/glossary/

When you're ready, the full guide walks through each of these in detail, with the specific programs, links, and steps for your situation. Start at https://yourcrisisguide.com/resources/.

Next: the First 10 Days plan

For the calls, forms, and scripts in the first 10 days, including a printable booklet, see First 10 days after diagnosis: what to do.



Scan to open the First 10 Days plan, or type https://yourcrisisguide.com/first-10-days-action-plan/

Want it on paper? The free printable first-week checklist (PDF) has room for names, numbers, questions, and a call log. No sign-up.
https://yourcrisisguide.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/11/first-week-checklist.pdf

Explore all resources: https://yourcrisisguide.com/resources/

Printed links

Every link from the online guide is printed here in full. Each one was opened and checked on November 17, 2026.

This guide (The First 72 Hours). https://yourcrisisguide.com/first-72-hours/

Child life specialists: what they do and what to ask for. https://yourcrisisguide.com/child-life-specialists/

Employment Help. https://yourcrisisguide.com/employment-help/

Financial Resources. https://yourcrisisguide.com/financial-resources/

Government Assistance. https://yourcrisisguide.com/government-assistance/

Housing Assistance. https://yourcrisisguide.com/housing-assistance/

Your First Week: A Checklist. https://yourcrisisguide.com/first-week-checklist/

First-week checklist (printable PDF). https://yourcrisisguide.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/11/first-week-checklist.pdf

Glossary. https://yourcrisisguide.com/glossary/

First 10 days after diagnosis: what to do. https://yourcrisisguide.com/first-10-days-action-plan/

Resources. https://yourcrisisguide.com/resources/

Contact us, if a link is out of date. https://yourcrisisguide.com/contact/

This booklet is a free, optional print companion to the online guide. It is not a substitute for the website, and it is not medical, legal, financial, or tax advice.

YOUR CRISIS GUIDE

Keep this booklet, and check the website.

Programs change. For the most up-to-date version of this guide, visit:

https://yourcrisisguide.com/first-72-hours/

Last updated: November 2026

If a link here is out of date, tell us at https://yourcrisisguide.com/contact/ so we can fix it for the next family.

Scan to open the latest version of this guide.

Free guide from yourcrisisguide.com