



# Somatic Symptom Disorders in Children

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You have been diagnosed with a **Somatic Symptom Disorder**.

We know that the symptoms you are having are real and that they may be causing great pain, frustration, and confusion for you and your entire family. The purpose of this handout is to help you and your family understand Somatic Symptom Disorders and how your medical team will work with you through treatment. It is our goal to help you return to the normal function you enjoyed prior to this illness.

If you develop any new symptoms, please let your pediatrician know.

## **What are Somatic Symptom Disorders?**

Somatic Symptom Disorders are a group of physical symptoms for which a physical cause cannot be found. These physical symptoms are not caused by a physical disease or injury.

## **How are Somatic Symptom Disorders treated?**

You will receive a comprehensive treatment plan prior to discharge that may include:

- pain management
- physical therapy
- relaxation training
- family therapy
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

You will also receive guidelines on:

- how to self-monitor symptoms
- when to call your doctor and/or therapist
- how to set functional goals

As part of the treatment plan, it is very important for you to return to your usual activities, including school and social outings, even if you are still having

some symptoms. You will receive a back-to-school letter before discharge from the hospital.

After discharge from the hospital, continue to see your pediatrician at regular intervals to monitor progress of your improvement. New symptoms can arise in patients with Somatic Symptom Disorders. If you develop new symptoms at any time make sure you let your pediatrician know. To avoid missing school try to schedule appointments before or after school hours whenever possible.

### **Where can I learn more?**

The best way to understand your diagnosis is to talk with your care providers. You will be receiving a book titled *Overcoming Functional Neurologic Symptoms: A Five Step Approach* by Christopher Williams et al. This book was written for adults, but we believe that it is suitable for all ages and will be very helpful to you.

The following resources may also be helpful to you and your family as you are learning about Somatic Symptom Disorders and your treatment plan:

- **Somatoform Disorder Online Support Group:** A community of patients, family members and friends dedicated to dealing with Somatoform Disorder. To access visit: <https://www.mdjunction.com/somatoform-disorder>
- *Managing Your Child's Chronic Pain.* by Tonya M. Palermo and Emily F. Law
- **Somatic Symptom Disorder.** Patient Education Center, Harvard Medical School. <http://www.patienteducationcenter.org/articles/somatization-disorder>

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