Taking Charge of Your Health Care:
A handout for adolescents and young adults with special health care needs and disabilities

Meet people...make friends
- Work at making friends; it isn’t easy for anyone. Reaching out is hard, but it’s worth the effort.
- Join clubs or committees that you are interested in. This is a good way to meet people.
- Get to know what other kids are interested in: movies, music, clothes.
- Figure out the people at school who can help you connect with other teens such as a teacher or guidance counselor.
- Go to school functions such as school dances, plays or sports events.
- Spend time with friends with disabilities and special health care needs.
- Spend time with friends who do not have disabilities and special health care needs.

Enjoy recreation in your community
- Try out different activities to find out what you might enjoy.
- Call organizations such as the local YMCA to see if their activities are a good fit for you.
- Visit the place where the activity may be held so that you can plan accordingly.
- Identify your need for accommodations.
- Work with the recreation staff to adapt the program for you.
- Discuss with your doctor any health-related issues you should consider when planning your activities.

Have fun at home
- Keep fun in your family. Take time to enjoy yourself with your family.
- Think about activities you’d like to do at home with a friend.
- Invite friends to your home.
- Ask your parents to let you bring a friend along when you go to places such as the movies.
- Include your friends in activities that you do at home.
- Consider participating in recreation or fitness activities with your family.

Know where to get information about recreational experiences
- Check out the school or local library for flyers on upcoming activities.
- Ask other adolescents about activities they enjoy and participate in.
- Surf the Internet. Many cities and towns have recreational Web sites.
- Look in the calendar section of the newspaper for events close to home.
- Join a group where you can meet other adolescents with special health care needs and disabilities.
- Consider the following as good places to find out about activities:
  - City/town recreation department, Chamber of Commerce, Cultural council in your city/town, Colleges and universities, Health and fitness clubs, YMCA?YWCA, United Way, Easter Seals, Boy/Girl Scouts, Parks and beaches in your local area.

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