



HOW TO SUPPORT PRESCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN COPING DURING THEIR HOSPITALIZATION

CHILD LIFE AT CITY OF HOPE

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Common Responses to Illness and Hospitalization

- Regression, including bed-wetting or changes in eating and sleeping
- Acting out or physical/verbal aggression
- Guilt

Possible Hospitalization Fears/Concerns

- Fear of separation from caregivers
- Fear of strangers
- Fear or guilt that their illness is their fault
- Fear of pain and procedures

Tips for a Child-friendly Environment

- Utilize privacy curtains.
- Encourage staff to knock and introduce themselves prior to entering the room.
- Encourage your child to decorate their room with pictures of family and familiar items from home.
- If possible, advocate to have procedures done in the procedure room.
- Provide comfort items from home like a favorite stuffed animal or blanket.

Ways to Continue Supporting Your Child's Healthy Development

- If possible, encourage your child to help in his or her care.
- Allow your child to engage in safe and active play.
- Help your child understand it is not his or her fault they are in the hospital.
- Be honest and use simple words to help your child prepare for what will be happening to his or her body.
- Praise your child's behaviors when he or she has accomplished something challenging.

Ways You Can Support Your Child

- Develop a schedule to offer stability and create a calmer environment.
- It is helpful for you to set limits on their behaviors and activities.
- Use time prompts to help your child transition between tasks or activities, for example, "you have two more minutes to play, and then we are going to take your medicine."

Encourage Choices

To support your child's independence:

- Encourage different choices of food or drink to support medication taking.
- Allow your child to choose activities, movies or shows he or she would like to do or watch to have fun.
- Allow your child the option of what he or she wants to wear.



Activities to Enhance Coping

- Pretend play and dress up
- Arts and crafts activities
- Watch favorite movies or cartoons.
- Allow your child to safely explore frequently used medical items, for example paint with syringes.

