

HOW TO SUPPORT SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN COPING DURING A HOSPITALIZATION



CHILD LIFE AT CITY OF HOPE

For Child Life support and education, please email your Child Life Specialist:



Jo Ann Namm,
M.S., CCLS
jnamm@coh.org



Marisol Trujillo,
M.S., CCLS
mtrujillo@coh.org



Megan Matthews,
M.S., CCLS
mematthews@coh.org



Marissa Verdin,
M.S., CCLS
mverdin@coh.org

Common Responses to Illness and Hospitalization

- Regression, including bed-wetting or changes in eating and sleeping
- Frustration
- Withdrawal
- Feelings of isolation
- Loss of control
- Overdependence
- Helplessness

Possible Hospitalization Fears/Concerns

- Separation from family and friends
- Fear or guilt that the illness is their fault
- Fear of pain and invasive procedures
- Fear of death

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 his or her room with pictures of friends and family, and familiar items from home.
- If possible, advocate to have procedures done in the procedure room.

Ways to Continue Supporting Your Child's Healthy Development

- Provide your child opportunities to engage in new games or activities to allow him or her to feel proud of his or her accomplishments.
- School-aged children typically think logically. Use simple and honest language to help prepare them for what is happening.

Ways You Can Support Your Child

- Develop a schedule to facilitate stability and create healthy habits for you and your child.
- Encourage your family rituals and/or traditions to help bring "home" into the hospital.
- Praise your child when he or she is able to accomplish something challenging in the hospital.
- Encourage them to ask you and the medical team questions about their care.
- Encourage your child to share his or her feelings.

Encourage Choices

To support your child's independence:

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

Activities to Enhance Coping

- Play video games.
- Listen to music.
- Arts and crafts activities
- Write in a journal.
- Keep in touch with friends.
- Provide familiar toys or activities from home.
- Watch favorite movies or cartoons.
- Play cards and board games.

