



HOW TO SUPPORT TODDLERS COPING DURING THEIR HOSPITALIZATION

CHILD LIFE AT CITY OF HOPE

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Common Responses to Illness and Hospitalization

- Regression, including changes in potty training or changes in eating and sleeping
- Uncooperative
- Irritability
- Tantrums

Possible Hospitalization Fears/Concerns

- Separation anxiety and fear of strangers
- Fear and mistrust of the environment
- Loss of independence

Tips for a Child-friendly Environment

- Encourage staff to knock and introduce themselves prior to entering the room.
- Encourage the medical team to get down to your child's eye level when they are talking with him or her.
- Decorate your child's room with pictures of family and familiar items.
- If possible, advocate to have procedures done in the procedure room.

Ways to Continue Supporting Your Child's Healthy Development

- It can be scary for toddlers when they are forced to lay on their backs for procedures and pokes. Advocate to comfort hold your child to create a sense of safety and security.
- Allow your child to safely explore their environment through play and movement.
- If your child is fearful of a procedure, ask the nurse to show your child what they will be doing on a stuffed animal first.
- Be honest and use simple words to help your child prepare for what will be happening to his or her body.

Ways You Can Support Your Child

- Develop a schedule to offer stability and create healthy habits for you and your child.
- Encourage family traditions to help bring "home" into the hospital.
- Praise your child when they are able to accomplish something challenging in the hospital.

Encourage Choices

To support your child's independence:

- Encourage different choices of food or drink to support medication taking.
- Allow your child to choose which arm to use for taking blood pressure or which Band Aid he or she wants.
- Allow your child the option of what he or she wants to wear.



Activities to Enhance Coping

- Dancing and singing
- Coloring items
- Provide familiar toys or activities from home.
- Watch favorite movies or cartoons.
- Finger paint
- Read stories together.
- Use FaceTime to interact and connect with family.

