



Age-Specific Tips for Supporting Your Hospitalized Child Preschool (3-5 years)

Preschoolers are:

- Exploring and learning through the use of their imagination in play
- Further developing language skills
- Asserting control over their environments
- Beginning to enjoy social interactions with others

Preschoolers develop a sense of purpose when their caregivers encourage them to complete daily tasks on their own and initiate play with others. Feelings of guilt can occur if initiative is discouraged.

Toys to promote development:

Puppets
Kitchen sets
Dolls and action figures
Books
Play dough
Stickers
Bubbles
Animal figures
Stuffed animals
Legos
Blocks
Puzzles
Memory
Cars and trains
Arts and crafts
Dress up materials
Musical instruments
Ride-on equipment and wagons
Toys that encourage imagination

Common hospital stressors for preschoolers:

Loss of daily routine
New environments
Separation from loved ones
Fear of pain
Loss of control
Lack of choices
Limitations to eating
Hospital seen as punishment

How to help your preschooler cope:

- Maintain a routine.
- Bring familiar, comforting items from home.
- Be present and involved during potentially stressful or painful situations.
- Provide extra care and comfort.
- Offer realistic choices when available.
- Bring play into his or her hospital environment.
- Be open and honest as to what will happen and what he or she will see.
- Provide simple and concrete descriptions about how things will sound and feel.
- Clear up misconceptions about the hospital.

***Your preschooler can sense changes to your behavior caused by anxiety, stress, or fear. Be sure to take personal time to care for yourself.**