



Age-Specific Tips for Supporting Your Hospitalized Child *School-Age (5-12 years)*

School-agers are:

- Developing self-esteem and confidence through interactions with others
- Exploring likes and dislikes
- Increasing interactions with those outside their immediate families

School-agers develop a sense of confidence and ability when their caregivers encourage them to explore who they are as far as their interests, hobbies, and overall likes and dislikes. Feelings of inferiority can occur when self exploration is restricted.

Activities to promote development:

Play dough
Card and board games
Books and magazines
Arts and crafts
Puzzles
Legos
Stickers
Slime
Activity books
Video games
Movies
Reflective journals
Activities that encourage interaction with peers and self discovery

Common hospital stressors for school-agers:

Loss of daily routine
New environments
Separation from loved ones and peers
Fear of pain
Loss of control
Lack of choices
Limitations to eating
Fear of being different
Fear of falling behind in school or extracurriculars
Fear of death
Loss of independence

***Anger and withdrawal can be appropriate and normal responses to hospitalization. It is important to provide an proper outlet for these feelings.**

How to help your school-ager cope:

- Maintain a routine.
- Offer realistic choices when available.
- Bring familiar, comforting items from home.
- Be present and involved during potentially stressful or painful situations.
- Be open and honest as to what will happen and how it will feel.
- Involve your child in his or her plan of care.
- Encourage family and peer communication, visitation, and involvement.
- Acknowledge your child's feelings.
- Respect choices of privacy.
- Bring familiar activities (likes/dislikes) into his or her hospital environment.

***Your school-ager can sense changes to your own behavior caused by anxiety, stress or fear. This can cause a mirroring response in his or her behavior and can negatively impact his or her ability to cope. Be sure to take personal time to care for yourself.**