



Age-Specific Tips for Supporting Your Hospitalized Child

Toddlers (18 months-3 years)

Toddlers are:

- Exploring their independence
- Developing language and motor skills
- Beginning to use their imagination

Toddlers develop autonomy when caregivers allow them to explore their surroundings and begin to try things on their own. Feelings of shame and doubt can occur if children are overly controlled.

Toys to promote development:

Walkers
Push and pull toys
Balls
Telephone
Light up toys
Musical toys
Interactive toys
Large Legos
Stacking toys
Animals
Stickers
Bubbles
Building blocks
Baby dolls with accessories
Ride-on equipment
Pop-up books
Toys that encourage mastery of skills

Common hospital stressors for toddlers:

Loss of daily routine
Separation from loved ones
Fear of pain or harm
Stranger anxiety
Restriction of movement
New environments
Loss of independence and/or control

***Anger and regression can be appropriate and normal responses to hospitalization.**

How to help your toddler cope:

- Maintain a routine.
- Bring familiar, comforting items from home.
- Be present and involved during potentially stressful or painful situations.
- Provide soothing words and comforting touch.
- Offer realistic choices when available.
- Bring play into his or her hospital environment.

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