

How to keep your child relaxed during a hospital stay

March 9 2020, by Jennifer Guilliams



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During the winter months, pediatric admissions to the hospital increase due to flu and respiratory infections. In hospitals, a team of Child Life specialists help parents and kids cope with being in the hospital. Here are

some tips from them to reduce your child's fear during a scary and stressful time.

- Pack a bag. Bringing a blanket from home, as well as extra clothes, comfort items, [cell phone charger](#), and your [child's](#) favorite things will help them feel more at home.
- Advocate. You are the expert and know your child better than anyone. Talk to your child's care team about what qualifies as normal or abnormal behavior for your child.
- Accept help. Hospital stays affect the whole family. Take a break, allow visitors, call a friend and lean on your support system
- Self-care. Take care of yourself so you can take care of your child; don't forget to eat, sleep and take breaks throughout their stay.
- Ask questions. Speak up, keep notes, write down questions for the care team, especially if your child requires care after they leave the [hospital](#).
- Decorate the room. Hang up artwork, pictures, cards. Involve your child in the decoration so they can make the space their own.
- Get up. Encourage your child to get out of bed and out of the room. Visit the playroom, go for a walk or participate in child life activities.
- Be honest. Explain to your child what is happening and why in a developmentally appropriate way; ask them what they think is going to happen and create a coping plan
- Do not forget siblings. Your child's hospitalization impacts everyone in the family. Siblings can sometimes feel lost or forgotten, so make sure you pay attention to their feelings.
- Stick to a routine similar to home. Your child still needs structure; consistency, and rules or boundaries are important.
- Offer choices and control when possible. Your child's choices are

valid; whether it's what movie to watch or to eat for dinner, let them have some control in a situation where they otherwise feel helpless.

- Take it one day at a time. Be patient, stay calm, be positive; identify something good that happened each day.

Provided by University of Kentucky

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