



## How do I help sick children to cope with medical conditions and being hospitalised?

<p>Infants under one year old</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The biggest comfort parents can provide their children with is their company and care. It is common for infants to cry and throw tantrums, so cradling and gently comforting them, as well as singing near their ears, are ways to comfort them.</li> <li>➤ If the infant is using a medical device, parents can turn to medical and healthcare professionals for advice on how to carry or fondle their child. A parent's physical touch is crucial in helping their children to grow physically and mentally healthy.</li> <li>➤ Play soft music and give them sound and light sensory toys to play with.</li> </ul>
<p>One to three-year-old toddlers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ It can be stressful for toddlers to encounter strangers and unfamiliar environments, so it is best for parents to be around them in times like these.</li> <li>➤ The best ways to alleviate your toddler's stress are to keep regular hours, do physical exercises especially gross motor activities, and leave the bed to walk around more.</li> <li>➤ Use simple language to explain unfamiliar medical procedures, and let the toddlers make decisions if possible (For example, measuring their blood pressure on the arm or on the leg? Mixing orange juice or grape juice when taking their medicine).</li> <li>➤ Bring the toddler's favourite objects from home (For example, toys or blankets). Tantrum throwing and other regressive behaviour (such as being overly attached to parents) seems inevitable. Thus, parents should be patient and encourage their toddlers to overcome their behavioural challenges.</li> </ul>

Three to five-year-old preschool children

- It is anxious inducing for children to not be around with their parents. They may feel abandoned, so parents should accompany them all the time if possible.
- Children are still using their own perspectives to understand the world. They tend to view sickness and hospitalisation as punishment. Hence, it is important for parents to emphasise that hospitals are a place for recovery. Do not use threatening language to stop your children from not being cooperative. A simple yet clear explanation about medical procedures would help your child to understand the situation better.
- Compared to words, medical play is more effective in guiding your child to develop a better understanding on the purpose of hospitals. Letting children to play with toy or real medical equipment safely with clear explanation can help ease their discomfort with the idea of hospitals.
- Children have imaginative minds, so stories and games are great ways to express themselves, as well as being the source of their strength and courage.

Children between six to twelve years old

- Children in school age have an understanding of the human body to a certain extent, therefore the fact of having a disease will put a heavy toll on them. These children are afraid that their limbs cannot function properly because of the disease that they have. Apart from losing normal bodily functions, they fear the pain and being given anaesthesia. Providing children with the correct information about these concepts would be useful in terms of understanding them better, as well as encouraging them to maintain other stuffs in their daily life and participate the process of healthcare. This ultimately develops their independence.
- Teach your children ways to cope with their physical discomfort, for instance breathing exercises for relaxation. With the use of imagination and self-affirming words, children can also gain more sense of control towards the disease, reducing feelings of stress and anxiety.