



How to help...Your Toddler in the Hospital

In the hospital, the toddler can be overwhelmed. They are in a new place where they see, smell, hear and feel things that can be upsetting. There are many strangers who come and go from their room. Large fears of the toddler are fear of separation and fear of loss of control. Caregiver presence and support is important at this stage. It is not uncommon at this stage to see children to move backwards in their development. Typically it is the last learned skill that is the first to fade away during and immediately following hospitalization. Below are some ways to support your toddler's development.

Below are some ways to help support your toddler-age child

- Share information with staff about your child's cues, needs and typical responses.
- When possible, work with staff to develop regular routines.
- Remain involved in your child's care.
- Display photos of family members in your child's hospital room.
- Bring some of your child's familiar/ favorite objects from home, such as blankets, toys and stuffed animals.
- Encourage your child to express their emotions while keeping appropriate limits and boundaries.
- Offer your child security objects during stressful situations.
- Share your child's typical names/labels for objects and people with the staff.
- Provide play activities to encourage continued development.
- Provide consistent boundaries and limits as predictability to help your child feel safe.
- When medically appropriate, encourage your child to self-feed.
- When medically appropriate, encourage your child to explore their environment.
- Use your child's behavior to help determine their understanding of a situation.
- Be honest if you need to leave your child's bedside. Assure them of your return.
- Help give your child simple explanations prior to medical/nursing procedures.
- Lying down flat during a procedure may feel vulnerable and unnatural. Ask your nurse or doctor if your child can sit up during the procedure. Please ask for *Comfort Holding Techniques* handout or ask to speak with a Child Life Specialist for ideas on how to best support your child during a procedure.