

# Let's talk about...

**U.S. News  
"Best Children's  
Hospitals" rankings**


Ranked among the nation's best in five pediatric specialties



## Children and Medical Play

**B**eing in the hospital can be stressful for children and play is a safe and familiar way for children to process their hospital experience. Medical play can help your child work through the emotions they may be feeling. It gives your child a chance to regain a sense of control. It may be done before, during, or after a visit to the doctor, dentist, or hospital.

### Some tips to keep in mind:

- Allow plenty of uninterrupted time.
  - Use dolls or stuffed animals to act as patients. Use toy doctor kits. If you have them, you can add things like cotton balls, band-aids, or medical tape.
  - Let your child direct the play and follow their lead.
  - Allow your child to express their feelings and thoughts while playing.
  - If your child is too sick to play, you can play for them. This way you can share what they might need to know and give them a chance to talk about their feelings.
  - Your child may not use the medical items in the "right" way. They are exploring, and it might help them get more comfortable with such things.
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- You might see that there is something your child does not understand about their medical care. Take this as an opportunity to explain the care using words your child will understand.
  - Answer any questions that come up honestly. This will help your child trust you and the health care team. If you cannot answer a question, let your child know you will ask the nurse or doctor.
  - Watch for nonverbal signs that your child's feelings are getting too big. If you see this, help them redirect or wrap up the play experience.

**For more information or to connect with a Child Life Specialist, please visit: <http://ucdavis.health/childlife>**