



Needs for Hospitalized Children

I am 0-4 Months Old

Play:

- I like soft music, singing and rocking
- I like to play with small rattles and look at mobiles
- Please talk to me in a low voice
- I also like to play in front of a mirror

Social:

- I begin to smile in response to other's smiles at 6 – 8 weeks old
- I can show pleasure by making funny noises
- I love to be rocked and sung to
- I sleep off and on between feedings, and for about 4 – 6 hours a night
- You can interact with me by holding me in front of your face, talking about everything you are doing, and moving my arms and legs

Sleep:

- I need 15-20 hours of sleep per day

What I can do with my body:

- I can calm myself by sucking
- I like to use my hands to reach for objects
- I do not have very good head control, but I'm working on it
- I liked to be rocked
- Please prop me in your lap so I can see what people are doing

Concerns I have about being in the hospital:

- I do not like to be separated from my caregivers
- I do not get my usual stimulation
- I am in an unfamiliar setting
- I am out of my usual routine

How can you help me while I am in the hospital?

- Please bring my favorite things from home
- Take me out of my bed when I am awake
- Let my caregiver be with me as much as possible
- Provide me with stimulations that I can see, hear, and touch.
- Let me see lots of colors and shapes
- Think of ways that I can have a routine "play time"

I am 5 - 10 Months Old

Play:

- I like to play peek-a-boo
- I like toys that I can push or pull
- I love putting everything in my mouth
- I like large soft toys, rubber rings, blocks and toy keys
- Banging objects and throwing toys is also fun

Social:

- I can recognize familiar people and objects
- I want to explore my environment
- I can laugh aloud
- I wiggle around when I get excited
- I know how to get someone's attention through crying or making noises

Sleep:

- I need 14-16 hours of sleep per day

What I can do with my body:

- When I am young I like to roll around and work on sitting up
- As I get older I may begin to pull up on objects and work on crawling
- I am learning to pick up small things with my fingers
(I like finger foods)
- I can point to show the things I want
- I like to roll balls on the ground

Concerns I have about being in the hospital:

- I am afraid of strangers
- I do not like being separated from my caregiver
- Please find a comfortable position in which to hold me
- Do not disturb me when I am sleeping, it will disrupt my routine for the rest of the day
- I get bored being in my room all the time

How can you help me while I am in the hospital?

- Please bring my favorite things from home
- Take me out of my bed to play, I need different stimulation
- Let my caregiver be with me as much as possible
- Provide me with stimulations that I can see, hear, and touch
- Think of ways that I can have a routine "play time"
- Playing on a floor mat is a great way for me to get stronger and perfect my physical skills
- Play time is best if it is in a playroom or a place where there is new stimulation
- During procedures, let me sit comfortably in my caregivers lap

I am 11 - 15 Months Old

Play:

- I love peek-a-boo and patty-cake
- I like toys that I can poke, bang, pull and twist
- I like to put objects in a container and dump them out
- I can pretend to care for dolls and animals by feeding and holding them
- I like stacking blocks, the older I am the more I can stack

Social:

- I need my caregiver in the room with me so I don't get scared in strange places
- I love looking at myself in the mirror
- I like to imitate adults, especially when they make animal noises
- I can listen and wiggle my body to music
- As I get older I can repeat words that I hear
- Please read me books, this helps me learn common words

Sleep:

- I need 14-16 hours of sleep per day

What I can do with my body:

- I will climb on everything
- I can stand on my own, and am learning to take a few steps
- I like to use my fingers to pick up small toys
- I like to pound objects to see how loud I can be
- I want to be exploring my environment, not stuck in my crib

Concerns I have about being in the hospital:

- I am afraid of strange people and strange rooms
- I may try to pull out my tubes

Development

- I get really frustrated because the medical equipment can hinder my movement
- I can associate people with pain
- I need lots of different sights and sounds that can stimulate me
- I may have more dependent behaviors (I may want to drink from a bottle instead of a cup)
- I may become clingy and whiny when my caregiver is not around
- My routine may get disrupted, so make sure to create a daily schedule that is similar to what I do at home

How can you help me while I am in the hospital?

- Give me stimulating activities such as pop-up toys, trucks or dolls that make noise, containers I can put things in and out, and blocks for stacking
- Talk to me in a calming voice during procedures
- Let my caregivers help with my care as much as possible
- Provide a safe place for me to play (playrooms are great, but a mat on the floor is good too)
- Ask me about my favorite toys from home so you can provide similar activities that I normally play with

I am 16 - 20 Months Old

Play:

- I like to build block towers and then knock them down
- When you read to me I like to point out pictures and turn the pages
- I like to imitate adults (like pretending to talk on the telephone and taking care of my stuffed animals)
- I like when you hide my toys under or behind objects so I can find them
- I can scribble with crayons
- I like toys that I can take apart

Social:

- I love saying "NO!", so be careful not to ask me yes or no questions but rather give me options between two things
- I have a short attention span
- I can understand simple commands and answer yes or no questions
- I like for you to hand me things and then let me hand them back to you

Sleep:

- I need 14-16 hours of sleep per day

What I can do with my body:

- I am learning to have better balance and coordination
- I may begin running
- I can pickup and play with toys from a standing position
- I can shift crayons and marker from one hand to another
- I am able to walk backwards

Concerns I have about being in the hospital:

- I am afraid of strangers and strange places
- I get very tearful when my caregiver is gone
- I remember people that cause me pain
- I do not like being confined to my room, especially if I have to stay in my crib
- My daily routine is disturbed, so make sure to create a daily schedule that is similar to what I do at home
- I may respond to nurses and doctors with aggression

How can you help me while I am in the hospital?

- Provide me gauze so I can wrap up my stuffed animals to look like me
- Play games with me in my room
- Let my parents help with my care as much as possible
- Ask my parents ways that my environment can be as normal as possible
- Let me help during procedures by playing with the gauze or alcohol wipe

I am 21 - 24 Months Old

Play:

- I like to build block towers and then knock them down
- When you read to me I like to point out pictures and turn the pages
- I like to imitate adults (like pretending to talk on the telephone and taking care of my stuffed animals)
- I can scribble with crayons
- I like toys that I can take apart
- I like toys that make noise
- I have favorite toys and dolls

Social:

- I love saying "NO!", so be careful not to ask me yes or no questions but rather give me options between two things
- My vocabulary is increasing every day (I know up to 300 words, and can say 2 word combinations)
- I can show affection by giving hugs and kisses
- I can understand simple commands and answer yes or no questions
- I like for you to hand me things and then let me hand them back to you
- I have a strong sense of what is "mine"

Sleep:

- I need 12-16 hours of sleep per day

What I can do with my body:

- I can ride tricycles
- I can jump from low objects
- I can kick a ball
- I can drink from a straw
- I am learning to feed myself with a fork and spoon Concerns I have about being in the hospital:
 - I am afraid of strangers and strange places
 - I get very tearful when my caregiver is gone
 - I remember people that cause me pain
 - I am not getting enough normal stimulation
 - My daily routine is disturbed, so make sure to create a daily schedule that is similar to what I do at home
 - I may be afraid to explore my environment
 - I may become afraid of the dark

How can you help me while I am in the hospital?

- Find time for me to have safe play opportunities with new things
- Play games with me in my room
- Let my parents help with my care as much as possible
- Ask my parents ways that my environment can be as normal as possible
- Let me help during procedures by playing with the gauze or alcohol wipe

I am 2 - 3 years Old

Play:

- Playing helps me master my environment
- I can match pictures, objects and sounds
- I use play to learn and work through fears and express myself
- I like to listen to you talk to me and tell me about what you are doing
- I love playing with Play-Dough and other squishy textures

Social:

- I can understand "now", "soon" and "later"
- I am able to repeat stories from books.
- I can show jealousy
- I can use my words to make requests
- I am gaining a sense of control and confidence in my abilities
- I have a hard time understanding others point of view and am only concerned with MY thoughts

Sleep:

- I need 10-14 hours of sleep per day

What I can do with my body:

- I can put on my clothes but have trouble with zippers and laces
- I can feed myself with a fork and a spoon
- I can stand in place and hop on one foot
- I can sleep 10 hours a night

Concerns I have about being in the hospital:

- I feel like I am losing control and autonomy
- I am scared to move with IVs and other medical equipment connected to me
- I may regress in my abilities (potty training) and act like an infant
- I have a strong fear of strangers

How can you help me while I am in the hospital?

- Tell me what you are doing and what it is going to feel like
- Allow security objects to accompany me to procedures (ie blankets, stuffed animals, pacifiers or dolls)
- Provide me with opportunities for choice and control (you can ask me if I want cherry or grape flavored medicine)
- Blowing bubbles and singing songs can be helpful during procedures
- I am improving my self help skills, so encourage me to do things on my own

I am a Preschooler (3 - 5 years old)

Play:

- I love coloring and drawing
- I enjoy imaginative play (ie pretending to be a parent or a doctor)
- I love showing off my accomplishments
- I like cutting paper and finger painting
- I can build structures that symbolize other things such as animals or buildings

Social:

- I am beginning to have an understanding of time
- I have a great imagination, which can lead to misconceptions about the hospital
- I have difficulty separating make-believe from reality
- I can separate from my parents for short periods of time
- I am able to learn rules and obey them

Sleep:

- I need 10-14 hours of sleep per day

What I can do with my body:

- I can draw circles and squares
- I can feed self, brush teeth, comb hair, wash, dress, hang up clothes with little assistance
- I can form shapes and objects out of clay or play dough, sometimes human and animal figures
- I can thread small beads on a string

Concerns I have about being in the hospital:

- I fear long separation from my loved ones
- Medical procedures can be seen as a punishment
- Imagining what a procedure is going to be like can be worse than reality, I NEED to be told the truth
- I feel a sense of loss of control
- Unknown events scare me

How can you help me while I am in the hospital?

- Reinforce that illness is not child's fault and treatment is not child's punishment
- Give clear explanations as magical thinking and fear of bodily injury is common
- Encourage parental participation, verbalization, social interaction and give positive reinforcement.
- Set limits and provide structure
- Allow child to manipulate and explore medical supplies and their purpose
- Provide preparation for any procedure or "new" thing they will experience
- Give them a job during procedures (blowing a pinwheel or looking at a book will help them learn coping strategies)

Considerations for School Aged Children (5 - 11 Years)

Activities:

- Enjoy playing board games and videogames
- Being with friends becomes increasingly important
- Organized and group play creates a sense of security
- School aged children love to talk about themselves and what they like

Social:

- I have a strong desire to perform well, do things right
- I have interest in new skills
- I want to earn recognition and be successful
- I am independent and modest
- I have an increased anxiety of missing school
- I am learning social cooperation and appropriate behaviors
- I talk about my feelings

Sleep:

- I need 8-12 hours of sleep per day (varies by age, younger children need more)

Physical Issues:

- Puberty can be a source of anxiety (girls may begin menstruation)
- Differences between peers can be a source of anxiety and self consciousness

Concerns I have about being in the hospital:

- Disgrace, loss of competence
- Compromised body image
- Invasions of privacy
- Loss of status in peer group
- Death and disability
- Hesitant to reveal fears
- Loss of body control
- Enforced dependence

How can you help me while I am in the hospital?

- Reinforce that illness is not child's fault and treatment is not child's punishment
- "All about me" posters help the child feel in control and allows staff to know child's likes and dislikes
- Allow choices when possible (give them choice of IV location)
- Provide activities and games in order to make atmosphere more normal
- Preparation for procedure is important to reduce anxiety associated with the unknown
- Allow children to explore medical equipment and rehearse upcoming procedures

Considerations for Adolescents

Activities:

- Enjoy playing board games and videogames
- Being with friends is extremely important
- Cell phones and e mail may be an important way to allow patient to keep in touch with friends

Social:

- strong desire to perform well, do things right
- Interest in new skills
- Wants to earn recognition and be successful
- Independence and privacy
- Increased anxiety of missing school
- Social Cooperation
- Can verbalize feelings

Sleep:

- I need 8-12 hours of sleep per day (varies by individuals)

Physical Issues:

- Puberty can be a source of embarrassment and frustration
- Sexual development and body image are on the forefront of their minds, be sure to address how procedures and surgeries may impact this
- Body image and self-worth can be tormenting issues for both males and females

Concerns I have about being in the hospital:

- Compromised body image
- Invasions of privacy
- Loss of status in peer group
- Death and disability
- Hesitant to reveal fears
- Forced dependence on medical equipment and nursing staff can be frustrating
- Fear of failure in school
- Teenagers may hide from confusion and lack of understanding

How can you help me while I am in the hospital?

- respect individual as separate from parents
- altered body image, privacy and peers are paramount
- Involve teenagers in medical responsibilities and decision-making
- Peer socialization will benefit patient
- Preparation will help teenagers learn about and cope with procedures and diagnosis

The content was provided by Vanderbilt University Medical Center 2008