

Let's talk about...

Helping Your Toddler in the Hospital

Helping a toddler in the hospital means having a caregiver with them as much as possible, keeping their normal schedule, using easy words to explain what is happening, and using toys to help them feel less scared.

How Toddlers Act:

- They learn through play.
- They want to do things by themselves.
- They are talking more.
- They are starting to use the potty.
- They like having a routine.
- They have short attention spans.

What Causes Stress:

- Being away from family.
- Bad dreams.
- Being held down for procedures.
- Changes in their daily schedule.
- Fear of pain, strangers, or medical tools.

How They Might React:

- Acting like a younger child (losing skills they just learned).
- Refusing to help or listen.
- Fighting back with words or their body.
- Having temper tantrums.
- Being very clingy.
- Be honest and use easy words.



Things to Use for Support:

- Toys they can move or touch.
- Music and singing.
- Happy and positive talk.
- Bubbles.
- Favorite items from home.
- Comforting hugs.

Helpful Tips:

- **Tell the staff** what your child likes, how they usually act, and the special names they use for things.
- **Keep a routine** that feels like home as much as possible.
- **Bring favorites** like blankets, stuffed animals, or family photos to keep in the room.
- **Help them talk** about their feelings. Setting clear rules also helps them feel safe.
- **Let them play** and explore their room when it is safe.
- **Be honest** if you have to leave the room. Tell them exactly when you will be back.
- **Explain things simply** before a doctor or nurse starts a procedure.

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