

Let's talk about...

Kids and Medical Play

Being in the hospital can be tough. For kids, playing is a safe way to deal with big feelings. Medical play helps kids work through their emotions and helps them feel a sense of control.

Tips to Keep in Mind:

- **Supplies:** Use dolls or stuffed animals as the patients. It helps to have a toy medical kit with real items like cotton balls, Band-Aids, or medical tape.
- **Let them lead:** Let your child run the show. Follow their lead and give them plenty of quiet time to play without being interrupted.
- **Watch and listen:** Pay attention to the feelings or questions your child shares while they play.
- **Correct mistakes gently:** If you notice your child is confused about something during the play, explain it simply using words they know.
- **No “right” way to play:** It's okay if they don't use the medical tools correctly. They are just exploring and getting comfortable with them.
- **Play for them:** If your child is too sick to play, you can play for them. You can show them what's happening and ask how they feel. If possible, they can still help lead some of the play for you.



- **Be honest:** Answer their questions truthfully. This helps your child trust you and their medical team.
- **Know when to stop:** Watch for signs that your child is getting too upset. If the feelings get too big, help them switch to a different activity or finish the play.

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