



How to Support Your Child During a Medical Exam or Hospitalization

Birth to 1 Year

Common Concerns

- Separation from caregiver
- Loss/change of routine
- Multiple strangers & different caregivers
- Unfamiliar environment- sights, sounds, smells

Ways to Cope

- Caregiver presence
- Maintain routine as much as possible
- Comfort holding
- Call baby by name
- Having a comfort item from home (blanket or pacifier)
- Soothing music/heartbeat, recorded songs sung by caregiver

Toddler 1-3 Years

Common Concerns

- Magical thinking
- Egocentrism
- Mutilation, body change, punishment
- Feel hospitalization is punishment

Ways to Cope

- Encourage independence & curiosity
- Explain events
- Offer choices when possible

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School Age 5- 10 Years

Common Concerns

- Loss of control, privacy, & sense of mastery
- Being away from school, peers
- Feeling like being punished
- Needles & shots
- Pain

Ways to Cope

- Encourage self-esteem building
- Encourage contact with peers
- Emphasize that child has done nothing wrong
- Prepare for & explain upcoming treatments
- Provide opportunities for practicing coping plan

Adolescent 12-18 Years

Common Concerns

- Loss of independence, control, privacy
- Fear of a change to physical appearance/ heightened self-consciousness
- Separation from peers
- Concern of what others will think
- Fear of unknown
- Waking up during surgery

Ways to Cope

- Opportunities for control & role in the decision-making process
- Encourage to make a list of questions for healthcare providers
- Advocate for privacy
- Prepare for & explain upcoming treatments
- Encourage contact with peers
- Answer questions honestly



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Studies have shown that children's fear and anxiety related to medical experiences are decreased when they have been prepared for what to expect. Koller, D. (n.d.) Preparing children and adolescents for medical procedures, (47-52). Preparation allows a child to gain mastery and control, express their thoughts and feelings, clear up misconceptions, feel validated and create a successful coping plan.

This occurs when kids:

- Receive honest information
- Build a trusting rapport with medical providers
- Have parental support and involvement
- Explore and play with medical materials
- Have been prepared for a medical procedure through a variety of modalities (images, videos, tactile, auditory, rehearsal)
- Have a plan for coping and distraction during the procedure
- Are praised for their efforts "Great job keeping your arm still"

Parent Tips on Preparing Your Child for a Wellness Exam



Know before you go

Call your doctor prior to your child's wellness visit to gather information on what will occur.

- Are they due for any vaccinations?
- Will there be a vision/hearing screening?
- Will a urine sample be required?



Preparation at home

After you have gathered the information, you can then begin to prepare your child at home. Using a medical play doctor kit, add real materials that your child may see at their visit (gloves, bandages, gauze, tape, syringes, cotton balls). Give your child time to explore and play with lots of opportunities to lead and make choices. They can decide what role they want to have (doctor, nurse, patient, parent), where and how to use the medical materials and how long to play for.

After they have played and explored for a bit, you can teach them what will occur at their upcoming appointment. Be mindful of giving them as many choices as possible.

“During the exam do you want to sit on my lap or by yourself?”

“Do you want to watch what the doctor is doing or look away?”

Empower them through validation

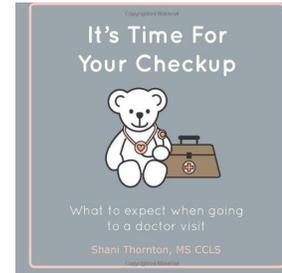
“Going to the doctor can be scary, but I will be there to help you through it.”

“Needles do hurt. You can squeeze my hand or take deep breaths to help.”

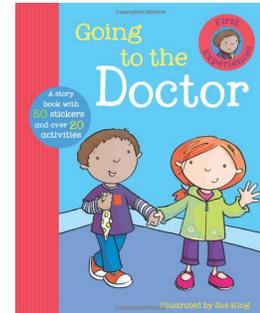


Recommended Children's Books on Preparing a Child for a Wellness/Hospital Visit

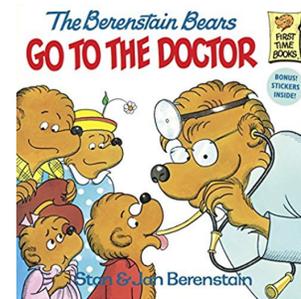
"It's Time For Your Checkup: What to Expect when
Going to a Doctor Visit"
By, Shani Thornton



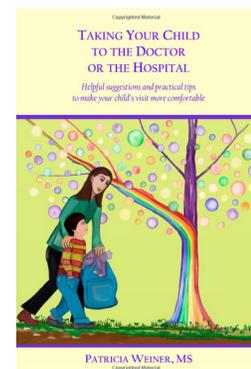
"Going to the Doctor"
By, Parragon Books



The Berenstain Bears
Going to the Doctor
By, Stan and Jan Berenstain



"Taking Your Child To The Doctor Or The Hospital:
Helpful suggestions and practical tips to make your
child's visit more comfortable"
By, Patricia Weiner





Parent Tips on Supporting Your Child During an Urgent Care Visit

When you are going to the hospital with your sick or injured child, you still play a valuable role in helping them cope with this unexpected visit. One of the most important things to keep in mind is to stay calm. Children will pick up on any uneasy feelings and anxiety from parents. It may be helpful if you can have an additional adult as support.



Advocate and Communicate

There may be many medical providers that you will encounter. Providing them with a past history of your child's medical experience can help. Has your child ever had an emergency visit before? Was it traumatic? What types of strategies helped; sitting on your lap, playing with a toy/electronic device, having the steps to the procedure explained?

Remind yourself that you are part of your child's healthcare team. You know your child better than anybody. You know their likes/dislikes, things that comfort them, their personality and so much more. Share this information with the medical providers so they can build a rapport with your child and help them feel safe.

We also recommend having a **Go Bag** packed in case of an emergency visit.

- Items to include:**
- Comfort items
 - Extra clothes
 - Phone charger
 - Small toys/portable games
 - Current medical record