

Medical Play at Home

Why Medical Play?

Medical play is a therapeutic activity used by child life specialists to promote healthy coping abilities in children experiencing stressful medical situations. Medical play has multiple benefits, including:

- Desensitizes the child to the medical equipment
- Allows the child to have control over the medical equipment
- Allows the child to handle medical equipment in a safe, fun environment
- Helps the child learn about the purpose and function of medical equipment
- Gives the child the opportunity to play out their beliefs around their medical experiences

Note: The child may share misconceptions they have while playing, this is a perfect time to correct the misconception and educate them at a developmentally appropriate level about their medical experiences. Engaging in medical play can help the child feel more comfortable with the medical equipment that is used on them, and therefore they cope better and cooperate more with medical experiences.

Why at Home?

Roswell Park's Certified Child Life Specialist, Jessica Wadium, engages children in medical play during their follow up and treatment appointments. However, due to the need to practice social distancing, Jessica is limited in her ability to provide one on one medical play. However, kids can still engage in medical play at home! Here are some ideas for simple medical play:



First Aid Butterflies

Supplies: Paper, gauze, band aids, markers, or paint

Steps: Create the shape of a butterfly with the gauze and band aids, then decorate as desired

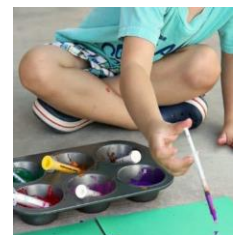
Purpose: Desensitizes gauze and band aids, which are frequently used during treatment. Also develops fine motor skills.

Syringe Painting

Supplies: Empty syringes, paper or canvas, paint, tape, cups, newspaper

Steps: Place paint in cups, place paper on top of newspaper or other disposable surface, suck up the paint with the empty syringe, have the child squirt the paint out of the syringe onto the paper to make splatter paint. Tape can also be placed on the paper or canvas first, then syringe paint, and lastly take off the paint to show a design.

Purpose: Desensitizes syringes, which are frequently used during treatment, and also develops fine motor skills.





Q-Tip X-Ray

Supplies: Colored paper, crayon or marker, Q Tips, glue

Steps: Trace the child's hand on paper, have them color in their hand, glue Q Tips where bones are. To make it look like a real X-Ray, use black paper and a white crayon.

Purpose: Educates the child about X-Rays as "pictures of our bones" and develops fine motor skills.

Affirmation Bracelets

Supplies: Paper, glue, scissors, markers, magazines (optional)

Steps: Cut out paper to fit the size of the wrist, color paper in, cut out positive words that describe the child (or write them), glue the words on, glue ends of paper to fit as a bracelet.

Purpose: Children often receive an ID bracelet in the hospital with their name. This activity takes what they experience in the hospital and turns it into a positive, along with increasing self-esteem.



Saran Wrap Sensory Play

Supplies: Saran wrap, paper, paint, tape, newspaper

Steps: Place the paper on top of newspaper or other disposable surface, have the child pick out what color paints they want to use and where on the paper, squirt small bits of paint onto the paper, take saran wrap to cover the entire paper, tape the edges of the Saran wrap down, let the child use their hands over the Saran wrap to quash the paint around.

Purpose: Saran wrap is frequently used to cover the numbing cream on a child's port, becoming part of the medical process. This activity desensitizes the Saran wrap. It also provides sensory input and develops fine motor skills.

Glove Stress Ball

Supplies: Medical glove, markers, play doh/kinetic sand/water beads (whatever works best for you)

Steps: Decorate the medical glove with markers if desired, fill the medical glove with squishable filling, tie a knot at the end of the medical glove.

Purpose: Desensitizes medical gloves and creates a stress ball to utilize.



Open Ended Medical Play

Supplies: Any pretend or real (safe) medical equipment you have at home!

Steps: Let this play be child directed and just follow their lead.

Purpose: Allows the child to be in control of the medical experience and play out their feelings.

Questions or looking for more ideas? Reach out to Jessica at Jessica.Wadium@roswellpark.org