



Hospital Play Service  
under COVID-19  
(Special Issue)

# How to prepare your child for hospitalization?



(Isolation)



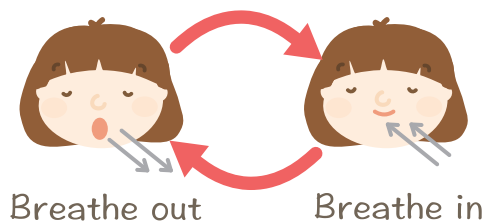
Parents might feel stressed that more and more children are infected in the 5th wave of COVID-19 or needing to be hospitalized as a result. Hospital Play Specialists have noticed that many parents appear helpless and frustrated towards their children being hospitalized.

Under the circumstance, play is a suitable prescription for children. We hope that the information below on play can help parents feel better prepared. Play can help distract and soothe children's emotion, and enhance their coping skills so that children can have positive hospitalization experience.

## 1. Psychological and materials preparation before hospitalization

### 1.1 Psychological Preparation

Facing the outbreak of a pandemic and massive overload of information, can make parents feel worried and nervous. Emotions might also fluctuate. Your child may pick up on your emotions and, in turn, be affected. Therefore, **it is important for you to manage your own emotions**. You can try to take a deep breath to calm yourself down; or do breathing exercises with your child. **Stay calm and positive**, which will have a positive impact on your child.



The situation in the hospitals is ever-changing and at the time of your child's admission, parents may not be able to accompany their child. Therefore, your child may need to stay alone in the hospital. Early communication and preparation can reduce your child's fear of hospitalization and the unknown situation.

## How to talk to your child about hospitalization and his/her illness

- You can find a suitable time to prepare with your child. Suitable time refers to **sufficient time and a calm mood**.
- You can explain **the purpose of hospitalization** to your child first (For example, since there is virus in your body, the doctor will help you to clear them away during hospitalization).
- You can make **a promise to pick up your child to go home**, so that your child can feel more secure.
- You can explain or tell stories to your child step by step by using **'Hospital Play Card'** and the **'2019 Coronavirus Disease Nucleic Acid Test'** video. You can also use the **'Emotion Card'** to understand your child's thoughts and emotions. Lastly, you can arrange the routine at hospital with your child by using **'My timetable'**.



The Consultant of Paediatric Infectious Diseases talks about Medical Isolation



'2019 Coronavirus Disease Nucleic Acid Test'



## 1.2 Materials Preparation

When you learn that your child got infected, or is in urgent need of hospitalization or quarantine, it can be worrying and overwhelming for both child and parent. Preparing the **'Child Admission Box'** in advance can increase a sense of control for all.

Other than essential items and documents, carrying some security objects can reduce any anxiety towards the unfamiliar hospital environment for your child. The following examples are for reference:



### 1 Personal Data



### 2 Daily necessities



### 3 Mobile phone/Tablet with Data card & cable

- You may not be able to accompany your child. Therefore, letting your child take along an electronic device with video and call functions would allow you to **contact, communicate and support your child** whenever possible. Regular contact can reduce negative emotions such loneliness and anxiety in your child.



- **Rehearsing with your child** how to communicate like through a simulated video chat or play is recommended. Make sure that your child can operate the device by himself/herself in the hospital.
- **What to play? Please refer to 'Tips for Online Play: School-Aged'**

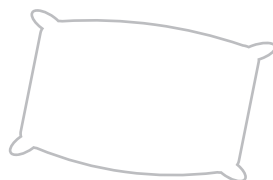
### 4 Play Materials

- Choose something that is easy to carry and with high play values (e.g., paper, crayons, game cards.)
- Choose toys that can be cleaned easily to avoid hidden germs and viruses
- When packing the hospital bag, let your child make some decisions and plan for hospital activities together, which can increase his/her sense of control.



### 5 Bring items with a sense of security (e.g., blanket, pillows, soothing towels, stuffed animal)

- Items that are used/played/made every day  
– keeping a routine can help your child adapt to the hospital more easily.
- Items that accompany your child to sleep  
– sufficient sleep can stabilize emotions and speed up recovery.
- Items that can stabilize mood  
– predictably emotions will fluctuate while your child is hospitalized alone.
- Items that are easy-to-replace  
– parents can prepare two identical items for replacement. It can prevent the separation anxiety when the child is not able to take it back home after discharge.



## 2. Tips for Online Play with your hospitalized Child

Children become nervous and overwhelmed when leaving their parents. Therefore, your child may cry when having video chats with you. In order to prevent increasing negative emotions between you and your child, the following tips are for reference:

- 1 Do rehearsals to have video chats and play with your child using mobile phones or tablets in advance, arrange play activities and materials together for better preparation.



- 2 Discuss the time for video chats/play. School-aged children may know how to use electronic devices. It is advised to discuss the time for video chats with your child in advance, so as to maintain a regular schedule even in the hospital.



- 3 Prepare a stand for the electronic device, so that your child can have free hands to play interactively.



- 4 Take good care of your emotion first. Because your child can feel your worries, please take a deep breath to calm yourself before the video chat; using a soft voice can also help your child stay brave.



- 5 Because of the limited size of the screen, you may not see the whole picture during video chats. If you have any questions, you may ask the nurse.



- 6 Making an appointment for the next video chat before ending every time can help your child feel at ease.



- 7 Using **Communication tips with "Eyes, Ears, Mouth, Nose & Hands"** can help you respond or support your child's emotions.



## Communication tips with "Eyes, Ears, Mouth, Nose & Hands"



### Eyes

Start the dialogue by referring to what you are observing regarding your child's emotions, physical condition and environment, etc.; this can let your child feel that you understand his/her situation.



### Ear

Listen patiently to your child's words, accept and affirm his/her situation and feelings (both positive and negative), and then respond positively and share your own feelings.



### Mouth

Make compliments, and appreciate the little things or behaviors, such as self-reliance, cooperative behavior, and appropriate ways to express emotions, so that your child can face hospitalization positively.



### Nose

When your child is agitated, parent should try to keep calm and peaceful facial expressions. Taking deep breaths with your child can help stabilize emotions.



### Hands

"Let's Play!" Play can distract, relax, soothe emotion and increase adaptability. Have fun!

## Tips for Online Play: School-Aged Child

'Play' is a part of life for every child. Keeping "play" will help children relax and adapt to hospitalization more easily. Therefore, it is recommended for parents to choose some age-appropriate activities and play virtually with their child beforehand.



## 3. How to prepare your toddler for hospitalization?

From six months old, children may feel anxious when leaving their caregivers or familiar environments. When parents have prepared their children for hospitalization, it can reduce their distress and separation anxiety, and increase a sense of security. It can also stabilize their emotions after discharge and have a positive influence on hospital and/or medical experiences in the future.



## Suitable materials for the young children

### Musical Toys

#### Portable Bluetooth Speaker (With charging cable or battery)

You can record your voice such as talking, singing or telling stories. When your child listens to your voice, he/she might feel more at ease. Besides, playing favorite songs can soothe children's emotion.

#### Personal belongings that you always use which have your scent (e.g., your clothes and towel)

Your scent is soothing and brings a sense of security because children have scent memory which they associate with you.



### Tips for Online Play: Toddler

Since toddlers are still developing in many aspects, the Department of Health recommends that toddlers' screen time should be limited to no more than 1 hour per day and less than 20 minutes every time.

## 4. How to prepare your child with special needs about hospitalization?

Generally speaking, many children will feel uneasy with a sudden change in daily life, and these changes may bring out emotional and behavioral upheaval. Children with special needs often need more time to understand the meaning of hospitalization.

Some children with special needs may be rigid, and/or highly sensitive to changes in the environment. Therefore, they need additional accommodations such as extra time, re-assurance and repeated explanation to help them adapt to the hospitalization experience.

### Psychological Preparation for a Child with Special Needs

#### Use picture cards and explain repeatedly

Use the ways that you know your child could understand best. Besides using picture cards and short videos to explain, repeating the demonstration or role play will help him/her understand.

#### Set up a Hospital Timetable (Refer to 'My timetable')

Set up a timetable and use picture cards with your child, arrange and maintain regular living habits in the hospital as much as possible, which can help reduce negative emotions and behavior issues, and adapt to hospitalization as soon as possible.

- Set the resting time
- Set the time to rest, video chat, and activities together with your child where possible





## Material Preparation for a Child with special needs

### Child's Preference Card

When a child with special needs encounters unfamiliar people, events, and environments, each reaction is different. Some may seem anxious, some may withdraw, and some may yell. Often, they may have difficulties how to express their needs. You can make a Child's Preference Card for your child which shares your child's preferences, habits, characteristics and needs, as well as ways to relieve emotions so that medical staff can understand your child more quickly and provide more appropriate care.



### Tips for Online Play: A Child with Special Needs

You can use sight and hearing to soothe your child's emotions. Seeing your friendly face and hearing familiar voices, in addition to games, will help increase the sense of security and adapt to hospitalization more easily.

## 5. How to emotionally support your child after discharge from hospital?

When children are sick, psychological, social and emotional well-being are also affected by the illness. If children's emotional health cannot be cared for during hospitalization, the experience of being ill and hospitalized might have a negative influence towards future hospital experiences, even physical and mental development.

The younger children easily experience anxiety about separation, so parents should pay attention to their children's emotion and behaviors and accept that their behaviors might be different from usual even after discharge from hospital. The more parents accompany their children and guide them to express their emotions, the sooner children return to their normal life.



You can watch the video below to see Hospital Play Specialists' sharing about coping with your child's emotions after discharge from hospital



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VALUE CHILDREN VALUE PLAY

18A, Block F, 3 Lok Man Road, Chai Wan, Hong Kong  
TEL : 2898 2922 FAX : 2898 4539  
EMAIL : info@playright.org.hk WEB : www.playright.org.hk

