

Play for young children (3 to 6 years)

Make-and-do

Young children love getting to make something themselves! Not only is this fun, but it is also providing opportunities for sensory exploration, language development and practicing fine motor skills. Ask the CHI volunteers for some arts and crafts materials and see what you can make. Remember the process of making something is more important than what the finished product looks like!

Song and dance

Many young children make up songs and sing to themselves as they play. Why not try making up a song together and maybe even a dance to go with it?

Action songs can be fun and also help young children to develop their co-ordination and balance – try ‘Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes’, ‘Ring a Ring o’ Rosie’, ‘If you’re happy and you know it’, ‘The Wheels on the Bus’, ‘The Hokey Pokey’ or any other songs you know with simple actions. If your child has limited mobility you can adapt the moves to suit them or hold their hands or feet to help them dance.

Drawing, colouring and writing

Ask CHI volunteers for crayons and paper and get working on your masterpiece!



Play for the whole family

Hospital visits can be difficult for the whole family. Why not play together to pass the time and make your experience a little less stressful?

Ask a CHI volunteer for some building blocks, some board games or some arts and crafts materials so that family members can play a game together or engage in some creative activity.

The following are some other fun activities that you and your children might like to try:



Yes/No Gameshow

One person asks a question that can have a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer (for example, Do you have a pet?) but the other must answer *without* saying ‘yes’ or ‘no’. If someone answers ‘yes’ or ‘no’, they are out and the next person steps in. Have fun trying to catch each other out!

Make up jokes

Make each other laugh by making up jokes. This is especially fun with little children who are just beginning to understand jokes. Start with some classic joke set-ups like ‘Why did the chicken cross the road?’ ‘Knock, knock, who’s there?’ or ‘How many (fill in the blank)s does it take to change a light bulb?’ The jokes don’t even need to make sense to be funny! You can even make the joke-telling a competition by seeing who can go the longest without laughing.

Puppet show

Everyone can take part in a puppet show! Ask the CHI volunteers for some card and art supplies to make your own puppets or even get creative with socks, gloves, scarves or whatever you have to hand. The puppets can tell a story you all know or they can make it up as they go along. Don’t forget to add sound effects!

How you can help Children in Hospital Ireland

Make a donation to help us organise play activities and fun events and buy much-needed toys and supplies – see: www.childreninhospital.ie/your-donation

Join our enthusiastic volunteer team or become a member of CHI and receive our latest news and information – email info@childreninhospital.ie



When are CHI volunteers in this hospital?



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Making hospital a happier place for children through play and advocacy

Play Resource for Parents of young children in hospital

Your child is in hospital and this can be a difficult time for you both. It can be distressing to see your child feeling unwell, hurt or stressed. One of the ways that you can support and comfort your child in this challenging time is by ensuring they have opportunities to play. This resource provides play ideas for children aged 0-6.

About Children in Hospital Ireland (CHI)

Our core aim is to promote the welfare of children in hospital and one of our key services is a volunteer led, play facilitation service in the children’s hospitals and paediatric wards. We also offer support and information for parents and families of children in hospital.

See www.childreninhospital.ie for more information



Importance of Play

Play is a natural part of childhood and essential for healthy development. Play is especially important in the hospital setting. Hospital can be a strange and confusing place for children and medical procedures can be scary and/or painful. Play can help your child to feel more secure and in control.

Although play comes naturally to most children, they may need some encouragement in hospital as they are in unfamiliar surroundings and may be unwell, injured, tired or stressed. If your child is confined to bed or is in a busy hospital waiting room, they may not be able to engage in their usual play activities so may need some help to get started.

Research suggests that play can also help to promote healing so by encouraging your child to play while they are in hospital you may be helping them to feel better and recover more quickly!



CHI Volunteers

Children in Hospital Ireland volunteers bring fun and enjoyment to sick children in many hospitals around Ireland. If you meet a CHI play volunteer during a hospital visit, let them know about your child's interests and how they like to play. Do they prefer to play on their own or with others? Do they like pretend play? Do they enjoy arts and crafts? Do they have toys with them or would they like to borrow something from the resources provided by CHI? Play activities on offer from CHI volunteers might include painting, jigsaws, building blocks, storytelling and games.

The volunteers appreciate that all children have a capacity to play and will adapt the activity to suit the needs and abilities of each child. They will be happy to follow your child's lead and help them to have a more positive experience in hospital.

If a CHI volunteer visits your child on the ward, you may want to stay and join in the fun or you may want to step out of the room to have a coffee, take a shower or get some fresh air. All Children in Hospital Ireland volunteers are trained and Garda vetted and are aware of the importance of alerting the nursing or medical staff if any concern arises while they are providing the play service to a child.



Play Suggestions for Parents

The following sections provide some fun ideas about ways to play with your child while they are in hospital.

Play for babies (0 to 18 months)

Smiles, cuddles and bouncing!

The simple, loving interactions between parents and baby which are part of everyday life at home are all the more important when a child is in hospital. Smiles and cuddles are, of course, top of the list here!

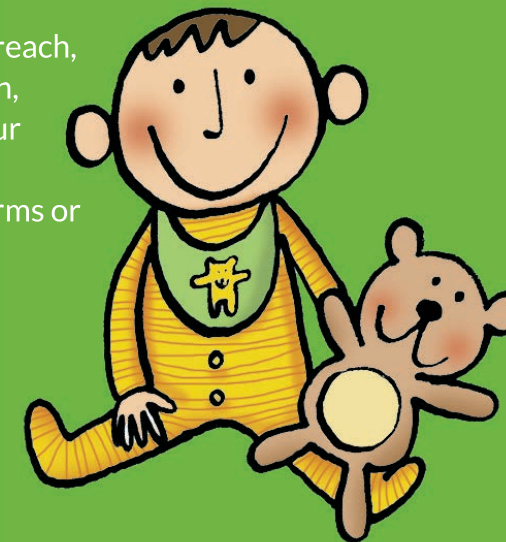
Gently bouncing the baby on your knee can be both comforting and fun for him or her. Add in some classic nursery rhymes, such as *Jack and Jill went up the Hill*, *Humpty Dumpty*, and others that you have been reading to your baby or that you remember from childhood.

Hide and seek

Hide a favourite toy under a towel while baby looks on and encourage them to find it – *'I wonder where teddy is?'* If your baby has limited vision, you could try this with a noisy toy like a rattle or squeaky toy.

Reach for the stars

Place toys just out of the baby's reach, thus encouraging them to stretch, roll or crawl towards them. If your baby's movement is limited, you might help them to move their arms or legs towards the toy.



Play for toddlers (18 months up to 3 years)

Stories and rhymes

In the strange environment that is the hospital ward or the emergency or outpatient department, stories – both familiar and new – can be a great comfort. Toddlers, of course, also love rhymes, especially ones with repetitive lines they can recite. Why not bring a book from home, look up some nursery rhymes online or ask a CHI volunteer to lend you a storybook?

Pretend play

Role play and imaginative games can be great ways for children to make sense of things and to learn about their world. Toys that resemble objects from the real world tend to be big hits with toddlers taking their first steps into role play – think of all the fun that can be had with toy kitchens and toy phones!

If toys are not available, you can still find ways to play make-believe. See if there is anything in the hospital room that can be used for pretend play – Could a spoon be a microphone? Could a towel be a magic carpet? Could the bed be a space ship? You might be surprised at all the ideas your child comes up with!

