



# Sibling Support

Preschool/Early Childhood (3 - 5 years)

The siblings of children who have frequent or extended medical experiences need support too; they are an important part of the family support system. We believe in supporting the whole family; whether the sibling experiences the medical setting or is cared for at home, ensuring their developmental and psychosocial needs are met, sets them up for mastering their individual experience and can be a positive coping support for the hospitalized child and family.

## Developmental Roadblocks for Preschool / Early Childhood Aged Siblings

Separation from parents  
Fear of bodily harm/mutilation  
Negative thinking  
Common reactions: guilt, anger, aggression, regression  
Illness viewed as punishment

## How to Help

Encourage parental involvement/support  
Allow expression of feelings  
Clarify misconceptions through honest communication  
Allow space for questions  
Provide simple, concrete information about child who is sick  
Provide reassurance  
Provide one-on-one time with the sibling  
Keep consistent boundaries and limit settings  
Provide opportunities for medical play of items they may see  
Engage child in medical experience

- Have them facetime or talk to sibling on the phone
- Choose comfort item to bring to the child in the hospital
- Color a picture to hang up in hospital room

Give them a job

- Help pack overnight bag
- Color pictures to hang in hospital room