

Medical Play

Play is how children explore, interact, and come to understand the world around them. Play helps children to learn and gives them a constructive way to express themselves. It is essential for their ongoing physical, emotional, cognitive, and social development.

Medical play can help children to:

- discover how equipment is used, so it does not seem as frightening
- become familiar with and more comfortable around medical equipment, also known as desensitisation
- be in control of medical items and feel more confident around them
- play out feelings or anxiety around their own, or a sibling's healthcare experiences
- feel better prepared for upcoming examinations or procedures, especially when done in advance, with enough time to process the information.

Supporting your child in medical play

- Allow your child to lead the play, exploring equipment at their own pace
- Allow your child to experiment with the equipment in their own way. It is okay if they are not using the equipment for its intended purpose
- Provide reassuring statements to support any feelings expressed
- Listen to their self-talk to understand their perceptions.
- Name their actions and feelings: "You're not too sure about that stethoscope, you're putting it back in the box"
- Always use language that supports positive engagement with health: "the nurse is a helper; they look after people when they are unwell"; "yes, the tape is very sticky, it helps to keep the dressing in place"
- Only share positive experiences of your own with your child. If you need to discuss a previous negative experience with health do this away from your child
- If your child asks questions you don't know, it's okay to be honest. Ask them how they think we could find out or write the question down for your clinician

