



PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Medical Play for Your Child's Ophthalmology Clinic Visit

This information explains what medical play is. It also explains how your child can use it to get ready for their ophthalmology (aaf-thal-MAA-luh-jee) clinic visit.

What is medical play?

Coming to the clinic may be new or stressful for your child. Medical play can help them feel more relaxed. Medical play is when your child plays with real or pretend medical items in their play kit. Your child can use their medical play kit at the clinic and at home.

What is included in my child's medical play kit?

The medical play kit is best for kids ages 3 to 7, but all ages can use it.

These items will be in your medical play kit:

- A bear or doll
- Empty eye drops container
- An anesthesia (A-nes-THEE-zhuh) mask

- Stickers

How can medical play help my child?

It can help your child:

- Feel more ready for what to expect during their clinic visit.
- Learn about medical items, such as eye drops or an anesthesia mask.
- Feel more relaxed and in control during clinic visits.
- Express how they feel about their clinic visit.
- Learn how to practice coping skills, such as:
 - Taking deep breaths.
 - Holding still.
 - Using a caregiver or comfort item (such as a bear or doll) for support.

How can I use medical play with my child?

An ophthalmology child life specialist or caregiver should be with your child during medical play. Your child may act out feelings about their clinic visit that are important for you to know and help with. This can help you understand what part of the visit worries your child the most. For example, they may pretend a doll is afraid of a medical item.

Talking with your child can help you learn what they know or fear about their clinic visit. It also helps you explain things that may not seem clear to your child.

Your child may show fear, anger, sadness, or another feeling that concerns you. If they do, it's important to talk with them about how they feel. To start the conversation, you could ask:

- Can you tell me what you're feeling?
- I see you look (sad, scared, excited, mad, etc.). What makes you feel this way?
- How do you feel when this happens to you?
- What do you think we can do to help you?

You can also ask questions about play items, such as:

- What is that?
- What is it for?
- How does the doctor use this?

If you have any questions or concerns about medical play or your child's visit, talk with your ophthalmology clinic child life specialist.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

Medical Play for Your Child's Ophthalmology Clinic Visit - Last updated on November 14, 2023

All rights owned and reserved by Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center