

Mobility changes: Helping children cope

When children are in a cast or must stay in bed, the change in mobility can be hard for them and their family. It is normal for children to move and play. If they can't move as much as they are used to, they may feel frustrated or angry. This can affect the whole family.

How can I help my child?

Feelings need to be expressed. Encourage children to tell you how they feel, or to draw pictures about it. You can also help reduce restlessness and frustration, by helping children focus on what they **can** do, for example:

- Use interactive books such as pop-up, lift-the-flap, or search-and-find types.
- Throw a foam ball or basketball.
- Squeeze playdough or a small, soft ball.

Help your child be as independent as possible. Have needed or special things within reach. For example, provide a container to hold your child's toys and games.

Help your child move as much as possible within the limits that have been set. Change positions by using a beanbag chair. Use a wagon or reclining wheelchair to help your child get around. Take short trips to the mall, zoo, park, or to the library for story time.

Provide activities

The following activities will help keep children of different ages entertained and active.

Infants and toddlers

Children in this age group who have just become more independent through crawling and walking can find limited mobility especially hard. These ideas can help:

- balls
- books
- mobiles
- pop-up toys
- pounding toys
- simple puzzles
- shape sorters
- stuffed animals
- toy mirrors
- xylophones

With supervision, use:

- bubbles
- Mylar® balloons (never latex)
- water toys

Preschoolers

Preschoolers like to play in ways that give them choices and the chance to be in control. Be sure to schedule rest time along with play time.

- board games
- coloring books
- crayons
- Duplos®

- Etch-a-Sketch®
- foam balls
- musical instruments
- Paint-with-Water® books
- play people
- pounding toys
- punching bags
- puppets
- puzzles
- sticker books

With supervision, use:

- bubbles
- Mylar® balloons (never latex)
- playdough
- water toys
- water color paints

School-age children

Friendship is important, so encourage friends to visit. If a video camera is available, a teacher could help students make a video of the class.

- board games
- books
- computer games
- crayons and markers
- crossword puzzles
- Etch-a-Sketch®
- felt boards
- foam balls
- hand-held games
- jigsaw puzzles
- Koosh® balls
- Legos®
- magnet games
- Mylar® balloons (never latex)
- paints
- paper or foam airplanes
- paper dolls
- playing cards
- punching bags
- puppets

- Silly Putty®
- stuffed animals
- tape recorders
- Velcro® target
- video games
- word searches

With supervision, use:

- bubbles
- car models
- clay
- craft projects
- fingerpainting
- library visit
- paint-by-number
- playdough
- rug hooking
- water play
- water color paints

What else do I need to know?

Never have latex balloons around young children. If they burst and pieces are swallowed, they cause choking. Use Mylar® balloons instead.

Questions?

This sheet is not specific to your child, but provides general information. If you have questions, please call Children's child life department at:

Minneapolis (612) 813-6259
St. Paul (651) 220-6465

For more reading material about this and other health topics, please call or visit the Family Resource Center library, or visit our Web site: www.childrensmn.org.

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