

Waiting Room Tips

Here are some ideas from parents for keeping your child safe and entertained in the waiting room. If you and your child have other suggestions we can consider for this list, please call Family Faculty at 1-888-CHILDREN, x 5346.

- Please stay with your child and supervise him/her at all times. Engage them in conversation right away to keep them occupied and less aware of waiting.
- Bring in a favorite hand-held game to play, book/magazine to read, toy, game or puzzle to play while waiting.
- Bring in a personal listening device with headphones and favorite music or book on tape to listen to while waiting. This gives your child something to focus on while controlling the noise level in the waiting area.
- Some kids enjoy playing with “sensory” items while waiting – such as a handheld fan, massage toys, light up toys, glitter wand, or pinwheel.
- Some children have difficulty with change or not knowing what to expect. It may help to create a social story or visual schedule to help your child prepare for the visit.

To make a social story: draw pictures or take photos of each step from leaving home, riding in car, arriving, checking in at registration desk, etc. Write a simple caption for each picture.

To make a visual schedule: draw, write, or cut out pictures of the above steps and attach to a piece of felt using tape or Velcro. As the child completes each step he/she can remove the picture and hand it to you.

Take a photo of the child sitting quietly or playing quietly and show the picture to the child as you walk into Children’s Specialized Hospital and while in the waiting room. This gives the child a cue for how to act while waiting. Make up a story about coming to Children’s and what your child will be doing. Read the story before your visit and while waiting.



- It may also help to keep a routine during your visit. For example, use color cards or picture flashcards as a signal for what to expect and what comes next. Use the same order of cards for each visit.
- If your child gets anxious while waiting, use soothing touch, singing, I-Spy or pop-up books to distract him/her. Talk about favorite things to help divert his/her attention and keep calm.
- Bring a simple snack if your child is coming right after school and might be hungry.
- If your child has difficulty waiting, try not to come too early for the appointment. Consider bringing someone who can wait with your child in the car until the appointment starts. Depending on the site, consider waiting with your child in the car and develop a system with the front desk staff to let you know when your therapist is ready. Consider calling ahead to make sure the clinician is running on time.

If your child is having a rough week for any reason, please consider calling the therapist to alert him/her so we can help problem solve with you any strategies that may ease the upcoming session (as well as help with home strategies).

Tips for handling meltdowns:

- Don't feel embarrassed. We are here to help – just ASK!
- Focus on safety. Try to keep child and others safe until he/she calms down.
- Offer distractions - if a meltdown occurs during a session, work with your clinician to problem solve!
- Sometimes children pick up on your tension and get even more upset. Try to remain calm instead of yelling or threatening. Remember this will pass!
- We know meltdowns can be stressful. Please talk to your clinician, Family Faculty, Psychology Staff, or Site Administrator for support.

Other community resources include:

- Mom2Mom (877-914-6662)
- Parent to Parent (800-372-6510)
- Parents Anonymous Family Helpline (800-THE KIDS)

