

Activities for Children Sick at Home

Beyond TV, video games, apps and the Internet

When you have a child who is sick at home, it can be tough to find things for them to do. Of course there's always TV, video games, apps and the Internet, but it's better to fill most of the day with other activities. We hope you find some ideas here. But first, there are a few things to remember:

- Avoid choosing activities that might frustrate your child. Choose things they can do with ease when feeling well. Familiar toys and play items give a child comfort and security. When choosing new projects or toys, select ones that are geared to a slightly younger age.
- Know that your child's attention span will be shorter than normal. Plan activities that can be finished in short periods of time or can be stopped and started again easily. If your child needs to stay in bed, place a table by the bedside. Provide a large, firm surface to work on. A lid from a large cardboard box can help keep track of pieces or supplies.
- Try to set regular times throughout the day to spend with your child so you can still go about your daily tasks. If your child is young, they will need your attention more often, but for shorter periods of time. If your child is older, they can manage being with you less often, but will enjoy having you stay long enough to play a game or do something together.
- Help your child get started on an activity, check on progress and help with clean up. This kind of structure encourages a child to continue on their own.
- Try not to insist on neatness. For messy activities, an old vinyl tablecloth can help protect your child's bed or play area. (Do not use thin plastic bags or sheets with children under three years due to suffocation hazard.)



Activity Suggestions

Under 3 Years:

- Cuddling and tender loving care
- Reading/looking at books
- Coloring
- Sorting/matching toys and activities
- Music
- Playdough
- Stacking/nesting toys and activities
- Easy-to-handle building sets (Duplo)
- Dolls/stuffed toys
- Activity sets or centers (such as Fisher Price Farm or Garage)

3 to 5 Years

- All of the activities listed above, plus
- Puzzles (5-25 large pieces)
- Simple matching games (Memory, Lotto, Picture Dominoes)

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- Puppets (make your own out of paper lunch sacks!)
- Painting
- Cutting and pasting
- Dramatic/imaginative play (“Let’s pretend...”)
- Bubbles

5 to 7 Years

- Simple games (Candyland, Chutes & Ladders, checkers, cards)
- Puzzles (up to 60 large pieces)
- Simple crafts, using: safety scissors, glue, crayons, non-toxic felt markers, tape, scrap material/yarn, paper/cardboard, egg cartons, paper towel tubes, ribbon, wrapping paper, etc.
- Construction/put-together sets with more pieces (Lego)
- Sorting/matching/counting activities (pictures, colors, objects)
- Reading/stories
- Music
- Playdough
- “Practice” academic skills
- Collections

7 to 9 Years

- Paper and pencil games (word search, mazes, matching, crosswords)
- Board games
- Puzzles (100 pieces)
- Crafts (can add more steps, materials)
- Beginning sewing activities
- Magnets and science-like activities
- Reading
- “Helping” activities

- Collections
- Music

9 to 11 Years

- Activities from above group, but make them harder or more complex. Your child has more defined interests at this age.

11 Years and Up

- Already developed interests will guide choices
- Competitive games
- Hobbies/collections
- Music
- Reading
- Talking
- Daydreaming, planning, organizing

Booklist

This list includes some of the many books for parents on this topic. Visit a local library or bookstore, or look online to choose those that best fit your needs and style of child rearing.

Alternatives to the Screen

101 Activities for Kids in Tight Spaces: At the Doctor’s Office, on Car, Train and Plane Trips, Home Sick in Bed.

Stock Kranowitz, Carol 1997

Creative Crafts for Kids

Dickinson, Gill and Owen, Cheryl, 2007

Easy craft projects for children ages 4 to 8.

The Kids’ Multicultural Art Book

Michaels, Alexandra, 2007

Art and craft experiences from around the world for children ages 3 to 9.

Little Hands Art Book

Press, Judy, 2008

Beginning art book for ages 2 to 6.

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The Super Duper Activity Book

Gordon, Lynn, 2003

120 games and projects using materials found around the home.

What to Do After You Turn off the TV

Lappe, Frances Moore, 1998

This book shares lots of fresh ideas for enjoying family time. From arts and crafts to cooking and baking, storytelling to make-believe, simple games to days at the beach, and educational experiences to just plain silly, this book has activities for toddlers, older children and the whole family.

To Learn More

- www.seattlechildrens.org
- Your child's healthcare provider

Seattle Children's will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Call Marketing Communications at 206-987-5205.

This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Seattle Children's. However, your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child's healthcare provider.

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