



Teaching Self Care Skills to Your Child with Special Health Needs

PRE-SCHOOL AGE

Parents can help the preschooler with a chronic condition or disability by providing:

1. Repeated conversations about disease/condition, pain, treatments, medications, to reassure they are not being punished.
2. Ways to use imaginary play, storytelling, props, drawings, and therapeutic play, to convey understanding of situation and to decrease anxiety.
3. Procedural explanations that describe the sequence of events the child will undergo and how the child can respond.
4. Positive reinforcement with praise and feedback following hospitalization, clinic visit, treatment or procedure.
5. Learning materials that educate the child about body structure and function, such as books, coloring books or software.
6. On-going honest communication with the child.

The preschooler with a chronic condition or disability learns to:

1. Identify type, intensity and location of pain; be able to report acute symptoms to caretakers.
2. Be able to understand simple explanations of bodily functions (heart, lung, kidney, brain).
3. Identify simple action of the medications and name the supplies and equipment used.
4. Be prompted to use self comforting measures in stressful situation (e.g. counting, imagery)
5. Use hygiene measures, with reminders and/or parent assistance.
6. Express emotions and feelings related to the disability/condition.