Play in hospital
Play is vital to the continued development of children and young people. From the earliest age play helps children to learn, to make friends and develop relationships, and to have fun. When children and young people are admitted to hospital they are often at their most vulnerable. Play helps them to adjust to a potentially stressful situation. Play can really make a difference.

Play in hospital helps children and young people to:
- Understand why they are in hospital and what will happen
- Cope with illness, with being in hospital and with treatment
- Regain confidence, independence and self-esteem
- Express their feelings
- Recover more quickly

Play also:
- Creates an environment where stress and anxiety are reduced
- Encourages family involvement
- Aids in assessment and diagnosis

Comprehensive play and recreation programmes provided by qualified hospital play specialists contribute to high quality interdisciplinary care of children and young people.

Early Childhood Education in Hospital
Most hospital play programmes incorporate a free early childhood education service, licensed and funded by the Ministry of Education.

Hospital Play Specialists
Hospital play specialists are qualified professionals who work as members of healthcare teams.

Their role with children and young people is to:
- Provide play and recreation programmes in activity rooms and at bedside
- Assess strengths and needs while in hospital
- Foster learning and wellbeing
- Provide therapeutic play, arts and other activities, to enable expression of feelings and concerns
- Provide preparation and support for potentially stressful experiences such as medical and surgical procedures
- Provide support and education for siblings and for adult family members

Hospital play specialists may also work with children and young people in community settings and provide information for other professionals and community groups.

Certification
New Zealand certified hospital play specialists have met competency and experience requirements established by the Hospital Play Specialists Association.
The Hospital Play Specialists Association

The Hospital Play Specialists Association promotes play in hospitals, advocates for healthcare environments which supports children and young people’s wellbeing and supports the role of hospital play specialists by setting and monitoring standards and providing ongoing professional development.

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Registered Charity #CC35270

For information about services in your area, contact the hospital play specialists in your local hospital.

Contact: