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| **Age** | **Developmental Characteristics** | **Hospital Stressors** | **How to Help** |
| **Toddlers (1-2 years)** | * Strives for independence​
* Sensory motor learning through exploration​
* Short attention span
 | * Unfamiliar environment​
* Altered routines​
* Fear of separation and pain​
* Stranger anxiety​
* Loss of autonomy
 | * Offer choices when appropriate​
* Comfort positioning with parent as comforter, never restrainer​
* Begin exam with something familiar​
* Allow child to “help” with care​
* Allow time to rest between procedures​
* Give one direction at a time
 |
| **Pre-School (3-5 years)** | * Egocentric​
* Difficulty distinguishing between reality and fantasy (magical thinking)​
* Limited concept of time​
* Learn best by doing​
* Need for caregiver under stress
 | * View illness and treatment as punishment​
* Fear of abandonment/separation​
* Misconceptions and inability to distinguish fantasy from reality​
* Fear of pain
 | * Give them a “job” during exam​
* Give choices and control​
* Use simple, concrete language​
* Reinforce exam is not punishment, explain reasoning for things, talk before touch​
* Medical Play​
* Anticipate and clarify misconceptions
 |
| **School- Age (6-12 years)** | * Able to think logically​
* Self-esteem evolving​
* Establishing same-sex peer groups
 | * Separation related to disruption in daily living  (school and peers)​
* Modesty concerns​
* Fear of body injury and never being well again​
* Enforced dependence
 | * Explain reason and purpose for things​
* Check for misunderstandings​
* Reinforce their body is “normal” or “intact”​
* Teach about equipment and function by introducing medical terms​
* Provide opportunities for success
 |
| **Adolescents (13-18 years)** | * Rapidly changing body image​
* Need for privacy​
* Body image relates to self-esteem​
* Socializing and peer group important​
* Risk-taking behavior
 | * Invasion of privacy​
* Lack of confidentiality​
* Concern for body image and physical changes​
* Dependency​
* Separation from peers
 | * Communicate honestly​
* Include patient in decision making​
* Support independence​
* Respect privacy​
* Allow choices, let them decide who accompanies to exam room​
* Allow them to ask questions
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