

INDOOR ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN WHEN THEY ARE ILL

Activity Ideas

Caring for a poorly child can be challenging and a tough task for any parent and despite everyone's best efforts there may be days when you find yourself at home looking after them - or worse - all having to self-isolate for two weeks.

Children react to being ill, and being housebound in different ways: some are fidgety, restless and active; others may be whiny, tearful, needy and extra emotional, some calmer than normal, or just generally out of sorts. Many want to be entertained as they don't know what to do with themselves, especially if they're hungry but can't eat, or tired but can't sleep.

As parents, we may be worried about missing work and the consequences of what we will return to but after an hour or so of decompressing from planning and work mode, it's normal to realise that we might as well try to enjoy some of this special time with our child.

If you run out of ideas after reading books, playing Lego, and watching a film here are a few more ideas to help keep children occupied.

- **Positioning:** Depending on how poorly they are you may need to plan activities that can be done lying down in bed or in a sitting position that do not require a table. Some examples include: playing with magnetic letters or shapes on a metal baking sheet, creating paper dolls, sewing cards, or using a laptop computer.
- **Make a cosy corner, den or tent:** A child might need to be calm or rest but that does not necessarily mean staying in bed. A child who has been home for a while needs different environments. Additional spaces can be created in any room of your home with pillows, blankets, or sleeping bags. This makes a great base to then start some creative activities such as, reading, making up stories or listening to music.
- **Location:** Break up the monotony by spending time in different rooms - move from your room to theirs and try to think of different activities in each. In your room could you fill a shoe box with 'treasures' getting them to go through each interesting item and reveal the story behind the object; In their room you could line up their toys by height, name them and create a story.
- **Cooking:** Can you cook together in the kitchen, get them to peel veggies to make a hearty soup or break up spaghetti for a noodle soup, peel and blend fruit for a smoothie, bake a cake, or make fruit juice ice pops

(especially useful if they have a temperature). Make sure what foods you are preparing follow your doctor's guidelines for what to eat with this illness. Make sure hand washing is part of the food preparation.

- **Bath time:** Have they been sweating or sick - can they take a bubble bath (if suitable & safe for them to do so) or can you create a foot spa in a bucket and give them a pedicure?
- **Boxes of Fun:** For children at the younger end of primary school, a cardboard box can provide a host of creative opportunities. If you happen to have a big box, they are great to draw houses on or paint, or smaller boxes can be made into dolls houses, while multiple smaller boxes make robots and box-pets that can take hours to create.
- **Event Planning:** Events are coming up that you can create crafts for - Easter, Mother's Day, Father's Day. How about preparing a costume or putting together a dressing up box?
- **Photo Albums:** Most children love looking at old photos of themselves and family. It's fun just sharing memories but they can also get involved sorting the photos or putting them into hard copy or digital albums.
- **Messy Play:** Depending on how relaxed you are about mess, consider making your own playdough - adding colours, scent, glitter and other tactile bits you can conjure up, or cornflour with water and colouring will keep most young children occupied for hours (on a tray with objects to drive through/pile on/cover).
- **Mood or theme boards:** Go through magazines together (sports, cars, food, etc). Cut out photos on a subject they're interested in and glue them on a board or large piece of card/paper.
- **Technology:** It's an easy go-to, but use listening to podcasts, audio books, or music to broaden their horizons. Find some educational games that are fun or record yourselves singing or telling stories.

Don't forget, when your child is ill, their attention span is typically shorter than usual so it's best to plan activities that can be easily interrupted and returned to at another time. This also makes it possible for children to drift off for those all-important recovery naps - when you might be able to have a moment of shut-eye too.