

# A Trip To The Doctor Can Be Child's Play

(NAPSA)—While taking your toddlers to the doctor probably isn't a walk in the park, it's natural for them to be scared by the bright lights, white coats and cold instruments that poke and prod them. With a little preparation that involves some playtime, though, you can alleviate some of their reservations and maybe even make the experience a little bit fun.

“Confronting their real and imagined fears takes a combination of patience and creative role-playing,” said pediatrician Dr. Macelle Neuwirth. “It's important to diminish unnecessary stress before and during the doctor visit so that we can make the children more comfortable and trusting and ultimately create a more ideal atmosphere for medical attention.”

Parenting expert Rosie Pope agrees. “Empowering your children with the truth means their fear and imagination won't run wild when it comes to the doctors,” she said. “Always stay upbeat about a doctor visit and explain what is going to happen before they arrive.”

### Start With a Conversation

It's important that you start by explaining to your toddlers both why they are going and that the doctor is there to make them feel



### How to turn playtime into prep time for a scary situation.

better—or keep them from getting sick. This is not the time to “surprise” them upon arrival at the doctor as that can only lead to “tears from fears.” Maybe the family's pet has been to the “pet doctor” and your toddler can see that it's feeling better—and was brave, too.

### Turn Playtime Into Prep Time

Playtime is an excellent time to talk about the upcoming visit and act out what they will most likely find when they get to the doctor. That way, you can address anything that may be scaring them and “role-play” different parts of the exam. The new Little Mommy Doctor Mommy doll from Mattel is not only a fun toy but a great tool

for this role-play. Because she comes complete with her own medical kit, you can play out taking your toddler's temperature, checking reflexes and even getting a shot. The interactive “prompts” from the doll can lead the playtime activity and then turn the tables with your toddler acting as “doctor.”

### Take a Familiar Toy With you to the Doctor

Children find comfort in the familiar—especially in an unfamiliar setting. If you've role-played the visit with Little Mommy, take the doll with you as a source of comfort. When toddlers are sick, they can tell the doctor “where it hurts” on the doll to take the emphasis off of them. Parts of the exam can be done together with the doll to mirror the playtime performed at home.

“When children can give a doll or her parent or sibling a pretend exam, it helps them feel more in control of a sometimes uncertain situation,” added Dr. Neuwirth.

End your visit with a treat to reward brave behavior, and if there were still some tears, that's OK. A little post-exam role-play offers another chance to share feelings. The more your toddlers know, the more prepared they will be the next time.