

# Reading Activities at the Doctor's Office

[www.pbs.org/parents](http://www.pbs.org/parents)

The doctor's office can seem like an unfriendly place to a child. Talk with your child about the people who work there and the things you see there. That will make the doctor's office seem more familiar. Many doctors' offices also have children's books and magazines in the waiting room. Reading to your child is a great way to help him relax.



## **Baby/Toddler**

**What's in the Picture?** In the waiting room, choose a simple book or a family magazine with a lot of large pictures. Look through it slowly, looking at the pictures together. Make a short comment about each picture and then relate it to your child's life. As you look at a magazine picture of a woman swimming, you can say "Look, she's swimming; swimming in the water. You like to swim in the tub, don't you?"

**Body Parts Rhyme.** Once inside the exam room, you may have to undress your child before the doctor arrives. Introduce your child to the names of her body parts through a rhyming game. "Belly belly, jelly jelly, baby has a jelly belly!" Touch or rub each body part as you say it so your child makes a connection between the body part and the word. Have fun as you make-up the rhymes and watch your child's excited responses.

**Saying Goodbye.** As you get your child dressed and ready to leave the doctor's office, sum up what the doctor did during the exam. "The doctor listened to your heart and looked in your ears." Then, invite her to say "Bye-bye" to everyone as you leave and say goodbye yourself. "Goodbye Doctor, thank you for giving me my check-up." "Goodbye nurse, thank you for weighing me." This helps her learn the words for things that happened today and shows her how we say goodbye when we leave a place.

## **Preschooler/Kindergartner**

**What's Going to Happen?** Sitting and waiting in the doctor's waiting room can be difficult. Luckily, there are lots of things to talk about. Explain to your child what is going to happen when he goes into the exam room. If your child is sick, you might say "First the nurse will come in to ask you what hurts. She will want to know if you feel hot. She will take your temperature to see if you have a fever." If your child feels well enough, play a pretend game. Say to your child "Good morning sir! Oh, you look like you don't feel well today. Do you have a fever?"

**What's That?** Inside the exam room, there is interesting equipment to see and talk about. Play a game with your child. Look at each piece of equipment and try to guess what it is used for. You can start by pointing to something and sharing your idea. "I think that equipment is for looking in ears, because it has a long, skinny part." Then ask your child

what he thinks. Out loud, wonder about the names for things: “I wonder what that ear thing is called?” When the doctor comes in, invite her to join in: “Doctor, we want to know about that piece of equipment “What is it used for and what is it called?”

**Read While You Wait.** There are often a lot of children’s books and magazines in the doctor’s waiting room. Ask your child to pick out a book and enjoy it together. When you read it to your child the first time, read it all the way through without stopping. If you are still waiting, read it again. As you read it for a second time, stop at interesting words and talk about them. “Hurricane- what do you think that means?” Connect the word to the story as you figure it out together. “The story said the boy got wet and cold. Maybe a hurricane is a kind of rainstorm.”

**Leaving the Office.** As you leave the doctor’s office, talk with your child about the exam and each of the things that happened in order. “First the nurse weighed you on the scale and measured you. Then the doctor came in and listened to your heart. After that, the doctor examined your eyes and ears.” This is also a good time to practice any new words that your child learned today: “Every time you visit the doctor, the nurse measures your height and weight. What did the doctor use to listen to your heart? Oh yes, a stethoscope!”

### **First-Grader/Reader-Writer**

**Who Works Here?** Talk with your child about the people who work at the doctor’s office, and what they are doing. This helps the people who work there seem more familiar. “That lady is answering the phone. I wonder if she is the receptionist? Do you think someone is calling her to make an appointment with the doctor?” You can encourage him to politely ask people about their jobs. As long as they aren’t too busy, they will be happy to talk with your child about what they do.

**Read While You Wait.** There are often a lot of things to read in the doctor’s waiting room. Invite your child to pick out a children’s book or magazine and read it to you. As she reads, help her to sound out unfamiliar words. First, ask her to spell the word. Then slowly say each sound in the word together. Notice letters that make different sounds in different words. For example the letter “c” may sound soft like in ceiling or hard like in cake.

**What’s In a Picture?** The waiting room and the exam room sometimes have pictures hanging on the walls. They may be decorations or posters with medical information. These give you a chance to use new words and ideas. If the picture is decorative you may ask your child’s opinion “Do you like the way the artist painted the mountains maroon?” Tell your child what you think too. “I like the way the design matches the curtains in the waiting room.” If the picture is a medical display you may talk about the information it has. “That poster tells about why it is so important to eat nutritious food.”