

Encourages interaction and development of positive attitudes toward others

Provides an expressive outlet for creative ideas and interests

Provides a means for accomplishing therapeutic goals (see Use of Play in Procedures, [Chapter 22](#))

Places child in active role and provides opportunity to make choices and be in control

Engaging in play activities gives children a sense of control. In the hospital environment, most decisions are made for the child; play and other expressive activities offer the child much-needed opportunities to make choices for themselves. Even if a child chooses not to participate in a particular activity, the nurse has offered the child a choice, perhaps one of only a few real choices the child has had that day.

Hospitalized children typically have lower energy levels than healthy children of the same age. Therefore, children may not appear engaged and enthusiastic about an activity even though they are enjoying the experience. Activities may need to be adjusted or limited based on the child's age, endurance, and any special needs.

### **Diversional Activities**

Almost any form of play can be used for diversion and recreation, but the activity should be selected on the basis of the child's age, interests, and limitations ([Fig. 19-7](#)). Children do not necessarily need special direction for using play materials. All they require is the raw materials with which to work and adult approval and supervision to help keep their natural enthusiasm or expression of feelings from getting out of control. Small children enjoy a variety of small, colorful toys that they can play with in bed or in their room or more elaborate play equipment, such as playhouses, sandboxes, rhythm instruments, or large boxes and blocks that may be a part of the hospital playroom.