

Veterinarian Play Day

Give children a dramatic play opportunity to explore being a veterinarian by caring for animals.

START

- Introduce this activity by asking Does anyone know what a veterinarian is? Has anyone ever been to one? Why did you go there?
- Continue this activity by saying Our doctor is very busy today with lots of sick animals. Would anyone be willing to jump in and help out? Now, would any of you like to bring your sick pet in for treatment? This can be said while handing out the animals to anyone who would like one.
- There should be two adults at this activity. One adult should monitor activity in the veterinarian's office and, if there are a lot of children participating, a second adult should act as the technician to explain that some of the children will need to wait in the waiting room. The technician can show them the seats and magazines, engage them in conversation about their pets, and ask them why they brought them in today. The technician will need to determine the order for the children and their pets to see the vet and to keep the lining up and waiting going smoothly.

NEXT STEPS

- Allow the children to guide their own play. You can intervene if the children have problems sharing or taking turns or if the children seem unsure about what to do with the props. You could also pretend to be a person with a pet waiting for the doctor.
- The veterinarian can be supported by asking questions such as Did you take the puppy's temperature? Did it seem high/low? Do you think she has a fever? If so, what shall we do? These questions should lead to use of the props, such as taking the animal's temperature, prescribing some medicine, or putting on a bandage.
- The clients can be supported by questions such as Has your turtle been sleeping OK? Is your bunny limping when it hops? Do you think its leg is broken? These questions and play will lead to lots of discussion by the children about their own pets or even about their own visits to the doctor or their illnesses. This is an important direction for the conversation to go, allowing the children to talk about and process scary, uncomfortable, or new experiences.
- For very young children, it's fine to keep the language and concepts very simple: What do you think would make the doggy feel better?
 - For older children, challenge them to think about more complex solutions for different ailments, even writing prescriptions or "doctor's orders" on paper for the clients to take home.

(continued on side 2)

MATERIALS

- * Assorted stuffed animals or animal puppets, or a combination
- * Veterinarian's bag (can be an old briefcase or a homemade doctor bag) filled with Band-Aids, cotton balls, gauze, tape, pretend medicine bottles, straws or other materials to use for giving "shots," and stethoscope
- * Veterinarian's jacket (can be an old white shirt or smock)
- * Any other materials that could be used in a veterinarian's office (e.g., x-rays, skeleton charts, books, paper, pencils, and clipboard with paper and pen)
- * Whiteboard for technician's notes
- * An area designated as the waiting room with chairs and magazines set up for "animal patients" and their people.

Learning Guideline:

Social/Emotional: Describe members of their family and discuss what parents do for their children to keep them safe and healthy.

Tip Sheets:

Be Healthy, Write



(continued from side 1)

FINISH UP

- Encourage each child to talk about how they and their pet felt about the vet visit. You can ask the following questions: Do you remember the doctor’s instructions? Does your pet feel better now?
- You can keep a record of the pets’ names and the information about their visit on the technician’s whiteboard.

EXPAND YOUR ACTIVITY

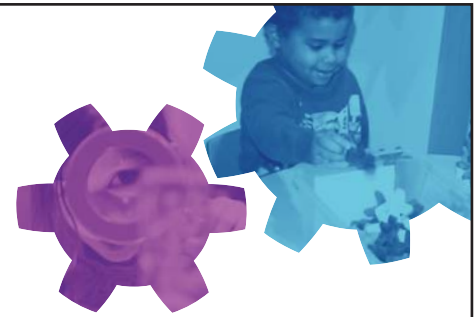
- The information collected on the whiteboard can be tallied and turned into graphs, as a math activity. For example, the doctor saw 2 dogs, 3 cats, and 1 fish.
- Using children’s reference books with lots of pictures, talk about bones, muscles, and skin and other organs, and discuss what their functions are. Talk about human anatomy and the differences and similarities between humans and other animals.

TAKE IT HOME

- Children can create a mini veterinarian office or animal hospital at home. Over time, you can ask how the animals are feeling, help to change bandages, administer shots, bring in new “patients,” or take the recovered ones home. This can initiate lots of conversation about sickness and healing and taking care of our health.
- Collect age-appropriate books about animal health and wellness that your children can access to look up information on their own.

BOOKS

- *A Day in the Life of a Builder* by Linda Hayward
- *The Three Little Javelinas* by Susan Lowell



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