

Making Injections Less Painful

Immunizations can provide your child with a lifetime of protection from serious diseases. Despite their value, some children may be worried and frightened about them. A calm relaxed parent using the techniques listed in this guide can help make getting an injection an experience that not only promotes health but also promotes growth.



GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- Try to remain as calm as possible. Children are sensitive to their parent's emotions.
- Keep the mood lighthearted and try to keep your child from worrying about the injection.
- Be honest. Avoid lying about getting a shot and never imply that it will not hurt.

DO: "It will hurt but only for a little while."

DON'T: "It doesn't hurt."

- Use positive language and ideas.

DO: "You're doing great."

DON'T: "I'll be here with you during the shot."

- Be matter of fact. Try to avoid bargaining or apologizing.

DO: "When we're done we can get a treat."

DON'T: "If you don't cry, I'll get you a treat."

DON'T: "I'm sorry that you have to get a shot."

- Avoid threatening a child with a shot when they misbehave.

DON'T: "Stop that or you will get a shot."

Even though children may receive more than one immunization during a visit, use the same approach for each injection.

INFANTS

Securing your baby

1. Hold your baby in your lap with the baby facing sideways.
2. Place your arms around the baby securing the legs between yours so that the thighs are exposed



During the injection

Once your baby is securely held, talk softly and stroke your baby.

Just prior to the immunization you can:

- Dip your child's pacifier in a sugar solution or drop some in your child's mouth. Your doctor will have the solution available.
- Begin to breastfeed and continue during the immunization.

Studies have shown that sugar water or breastfeeding genuinely reduces the pain that infants feel.

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TODDLERS AND PRESCHOOLERS

Prior to the Injection

Tell toddlers and preschoolers about the immunization as close to the injection as possible. Describe in simple language that the purpose of the shot is to keep them from getting sick

- Tell what will happen and how it will feel. Be honest.
- Never say it will not hurt but instead say that the pain lasts only a short while
- Explain that health care providers are friendly people who want to keep children healthy
- Tell your child you will be there throughout the procedure
- Prepare a kit to bring to the appointment that contains a special stuffed animal, books, or stories that the child likes
- Practice distraction techniques that may be helpful such as squeezing their stuffed animal, breathing or blowing bubbles in advance of the visit

Securing your child

1. Have your child sit in your lap either sideways, restraining legs between yours, or facing you
2. Tuck the child's arm closest to your body under your arm and secure the other arm to be injected in front



During the injection

Use the distraction technique that will be the most relaxing for your child. Here are some ideas

- Singing a favorite song or reading a favorite book together
- Blowing away the pain- deep breathing, party blowers, pinwheels, blowing bubbles, snake breathing (sssss), blowing a pretend feather off your hand
- Tightly squeezing your hand or a cuddly toy during the injection until the pain goes away
- Using imagination to take you to a special place more fun than the doctor's office

SCHOOL AGE/ ADOLESCENTS

Prior to the injection

Older children may also be anxious or worried about an injection and should be prepared in advance.

- Explain why they are getting a shot (what it is for), where it will be injected (usually upper arm), and how it will feel
- Always tell the truth. It is important to talk about the injection in a calm, straightforward manner without being apologetic

During the injection

- Additional distraction ideas for older children include: music, video games, as well as muscle relaxation and deep breathing

Connecticut Children's Medical Center is the region's only academic medical center dedicated exclusively to the care of children and young adults.

Offering a full range of pediatric services from birth to age 18, Connecticut Children's provides quality care at its hospitals in Hartford and Waterbury, its NICUs in Hartford and Farmington, its Specialty Care Centers in Farmington, Glastonbury, Hartford and Shelton and 12 other practice locations.

