

Coping with Needles

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Every child is unique and a strategy that works for one child, may not work for the other. Practice ways of coping together at home and use the ones that you find are most helpful for your child.

Reminder:

- **Be calm:** A calm presence will help with your child's anxiety, fear and pain. A calm voice and relaxed body language will help to make a child more confident.
- **Be honest:** Tell your child the truth about what they can expect during the procedure. The more they understand, the better chance of success.
- **Be positive:** Praise your child! They are doing something difficult and it's important to validate that. For example: "You did a great job trying to hold still."
- **Be curious:** After a procedure, ask your child what they thought and what was helpful.
- **Give your child a job:** Talk to them about their "job" to hold their arm still, take deep breath, keep their brain busy through distraction, etc.
- **Use comfort positions:** This helps them feel safe, secure, and supported.
- **Give Choices:** The needle itself is not a choice, when possible, give your child other choices surrounding the experience. For example:
 - Sit alone or with a caregiver
 - Watch or look away
 - Countdown or not
 - Play a game or watch a show
 - Play with a toy or blow bubbles
- **Medical Play:** Practice on a doll or stuffy. This provides a way to interact with medical materials in a non-threatening way and gives control to work through feelings, concerns, and experiences

Things to Try:

- **Deep Breaths:** Breathe through your nose, and out through your mouth, count to 3 each time.

Distraction Ideas:

Distraction is a proven way of helping with pain and distress. Distraction takes the focus away from the procedure and onto something else. Try some of the ideas below:

- **Watch videos** - home videos on your phone or a funny YouTube video.
- **Play a game** - on a phone or tablet, or try a game of I Spy.
- **Ice it** - Use an ice pack or ice cubes in a bag to numb the area or hold in your opposite hand to distract yourself.
- **Buzzy Bee** – ask your healthcare team if this distraction tool is available in your area.
- **Stress ball** – Alternatively you can scrunch your hand in a fist or scrunch your toes.
- **Listen to music** - Listening to music that you enjoy naturally relaxes and distracts our mind. It helps us focus on something not related to the task happening.
- **Ask questions** – this helps understand what is happening.
- **5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Technique:**
 - 5 things you can see
 - 4 things you can feel
 - 3 things you can hear
 - 2 things you can smell
 - 1 thing you can taste

Topical Options:

- Try a numbing cream on the injection site or numbing with ice.
 - Our hospital typically uses Emla or Ametop. If you are interested in this, talk to your doctor about getting it ahead of time. If you need it for bloodwork, have it put on the inside of the elbow on both sides approximately 45-60 minutes before the injection.
 - Always follow the instructions for use.
- Practice with your child beforehand. Have them try the numbing cream and the ice on different spots and poke with a toothpick to test which one they like best.