



COPING WITH NEEDLES

*Promoting Comfort. Partnering
Together. Every Time*



HOW CAN YOU HELP YOUR CHILD?

Preparing your child for any kind of needle procedure, medical treatment, or test can go a long way in helping them to cope positively and confidently. Here are a few tips to help manage any pain, fears, or worries he/she might be feeling.

You play an important role!

Be calm: A calm presence will help with your child's anxiety, fear and pain. Children can often tell when you may be worried or nervous. A calm voice and relaxed body language will help to make a child more confident.

Be creative: Think about what your child likes and what motivates them. Encourage them to participate. Empower them to learn how to take good care of themselves.

Be honest: Tell your child the truth about what they can expect will happen during the needle procedure. The more your child understands, the better chance of success. Remember to consider the age of your child and how much information/detail is appropriate.

Be positive: Praise your child whenever they do something well, like sitting still or cooperating (be specific with your praise). It will build your child's trust and it will help him/her learn to cope with stress in the future.

Be curious: After a procedure, ask your child what they thought and what was helpful.

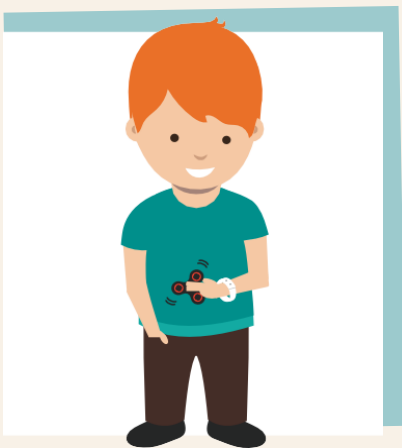
Be an advocate: You know your child the best. Let the health care team know what works and Does not work for them.

WHAT CAN YOUR CHILD DO?

Having a **Comfort Care Plan*** (Coping Plan) helps your child feel more in control and confident when learning new coping skills. Here are some things that can be incorporated into a Comfort Care Plan.

Get your child involved:

Remember, having a treatment, or procedure (like blood work or an immunization) is not a choice for them, but getting them involved in choosing the coping strategies they feel will help, can encourage interest, co-operation and confidence. Practicing the steps if the procedure beforehand, through play can be helpful in preparing your child.



Use Distraction: Distraction (keeping the brain busy) is a proven way of helping with pain and distress. Distraction takes the focus away from the procedure and puts it on something else. Some examples of distraction for different age groups are given in the following pages.

Use Topical anesthetics: Also known as numbing cream or spray can be used. The cream or spray numbs the skin. It can be very helpful in decreasing pain and worry. Numbing creams can be purchased in a pharmacy over the counter or prescribed by your doctor. Always follow the instructions for use. Numbing cream can be used for infants after one month or age. Breastfeeding is also recommended for infants before, during and after for pain relief and comfort.



Give your child a job: Talk to your child about their “job” e.g. Holding their arm still, deep breathing, keeping the brain busy with distraction are all important jobs to focus on during a needle procedure.

Make a routine: For regular needle procedures given at home, some children find comfort in knowing that it will be done the same way each time and in the same place. Try to fit the injection/treatment into your family’s routine rather than letting it control your life.



SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD DURING A NEEDLE PROCEDURE

It helps to act as your child's coach. Here are some ways to do this.

Use comfort positioning: Positioning your child for comfort helps them feel safe, secure, supported and in control. Some positions are shown in the next pages.

Reframe negative experiences: Memory matters. How we talk about the experience can change how your child will think and remember it. Focus on something that went positively and build on that for next time.

Use positive language: Encourage your child to use their coping strategies during the needle procedure. Here are some examples on how you might speak to a worried or fearful child.

INSTEAD OF SAYING THIS:

"This won't hurt"

BETTER TO SAY THIS:

"I don't know how this is going to feel for you, but if you use the strategies we talked about, it won't bother you so much."

(Don't predict the pain or how it will feel for your child. Empower them to be positive and take an active role in helping themselves)

INSTEAD OF SAYING THIS:

“I’m sorry...”

BETTER TO SAY THIS:

“You’re being so brave. Let’s do this together so that before you know it, we will be done.”

(Sorry sometimes implies you are doing something wrong – instead you are helping them to stay well.)

INSTEAD OF SAYING THIS:

“Don’t worry”

BETTER TO SAY THIS:

“I can understand how you might be feeling scared. Let’s start doing that relaxation breathing that we practiced so that you can start to feel safer and more in control.”

(Worry and anxiety can increase pain. Guide them on how to calm down)

- **Use words like “can” and “do”** instead of words like “won’t and “don’t” and “try” – try implies failure.
- **Avoid words like “hurt” and “pain”.** Try softer words like “uncomfortable” and “bother”
- **Use language that encourages the child’s coping.** This helps to strengthen their ability to learn how to cope and provides relief in suffering.



USING DISTRACTION

BABIES

- breastfeeding before, during, and after the procedure/test.
- giving sugar (toot sweet/sucrose)
- swaddling/facilitated tucking

TODDLERS

- comfort items such as a blanket or favourite toy
- singing, music
- blowing
- sound/pop-up books

PRESCHOOL & SCHOOL AGE

- imaginary play
- talking about other things
- textured toys/squishy balls
- breathing/relaxing
- blowing pinwheels, pretend birthday candles
- using tablets/smartphones/games
- I spy books
- sound books



ADOLESCENTS

- breathing/relaxation
- using tablet/smartphones/games/music
- engaging conversation

USING COMFORT POSITIONS

Using a comfort position during a needle procedure or treatment can help your child feel more in control. They will also feel safe and supported, have less pain and will be more likely to cooperate with the health care staff.

Children usually want their caregiver to comfort them, but they still want to feel in control. It helps if they can sit up rather than lie down. Infants can be breastfed before, during and after a needle.

On the right are some illustrations of some comfort positions. Talk to your health care team about the best and safest position for the procedure.



REFRAMING THE EXPERIENCE

Talking to children after a needle procedure can help make their memories more positive. This is called memory reframing. Research has shown that this helps children cope better the next time.

Be positive about the experience: put the attention on what went well. Even if it is a little thing.

Focus on what helped your child: such as deep breathing, facing the fear, or holding their arm still.

Talk about the positive, helpful things they and others (caregiver and staff) did: encourage them to talk about the helpful strategies to build their confidence. Tell them they did a great job. Help them to remember the positive coping tools and what they're going to use next time.

Tell them that memory matters: the way you think about and remember painful experiences is very important. Focusing on the positive parts helps your child be less scared. And being less scared helps things go better the next time.



MANAGING AT HOME

Below is a list of books and web-based resources that you might find helpful.

Learning How to Manage Pain during Medical Procedures. (ages 5 and up): You are the Boss of Your Brain.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UbK9FFoAcvs>

It Doesn't Have To Hurt: Proven Pain Control for Children

<http://www.itdoesnthavetohurt.ca>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KgBwVSYqfps&feature=youtu.be>

<http://itdoesnthavetohurt.ca>

Meg Foundation

<http://www.megfoundationforpain.org>

Solutions for Kids In Pain

<http://www.kidsinpain.ca>

Comfort Positioning (Children's Mercy Hospital)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YPi3xT6UCOs&t=14s>

Simply Sayin':

A free downloadable App giving simple brief explanations for medical experiences. By Phoenix Children's Child Life Department



Preparing Your Child for Surgery

<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/ach/Page16811.aspx#arriving>

A Child in Pain: How to help, what to do:

by Leora Kuttner, Crown Publishing, 1996, 2008

We hope that this booklet has been helpful in preparing your child for a needle procedure or treatment. The Child Life Team is committed to helping your child feel comfort, build confidence and resilience for any future health care experience. If you would like to make an appointment with a Child Life Specialist for further support or preparation please contact us at

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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MY COMFORT CARE PLAN

PLEASE CIRCLE THE THINGS THAT WILL MAKE YOU FEEL MORE COMFORTABLE DURING THE NEEDLE PROCEDURE.

 <p>Numbing Cream</p>	 <p>Counting down before the procedure</p>	 <p>Breathing or blowing</p>
 <p>Help take off sticky tape covering the numbing cream</p>	 <p>Looking / watching</p>	 <p>iPad or DS</p>
 <p>Special Toy/ Comfort Item</p>	 <p>Look away or eyes closed during the procedure</p>	 <p>Sit with my special person</p>
<p>Other: Anything else that would be important?</p>		

WHAT IS MY JOB?

- Keep my arm still, I may need help with this please.
- Use my breathing, deep breath in through the nose and long breaths out through my mouth.
- Keep my brain busy with distraction

HELPFUL HINT

Plan to do something special after the needle to recognize how brave you are.