

# TIPS FOR MAKING VACCINATIONS MORE COMFORTABLE FOR YOUR CHILD

Here are some evidence-based strategies to help you prepare for your child's vaccination in order to reduce their pain and distress, as well as improve their experience and yours.

## Preparation at home



- **Explain to your child what will happen during the vaccine and describe what it will feel like, keeping in mind that pain is subjective.**

- For example: "You might feel pressure or a pinch for a few seconds during the vaccine. You will tell me afterwards how it was for you!"
- Avoid using terms like "needle", "hurt".



- **Discuss with your child what you can do to make them more comfortable during the vaccine.**

- Bring their favorite toy or comfort item, listen to music, use a stress ball or play a video game.
- Choose a shirt with a short or loose sleeve and decide whether to buy numbing cream.



- **Use a numbing cream, if needed, to reduce discomfort during the vaccine injection.**

- Apply an amount around the size of a quarter to your child's upper arm (preferably their non-dominant arm i.e the left if they are right-handed), 30 to 60 minutes before vaccination according to the product's instructions.
- In Canada, numbing creams are available without a prescription in pharmacies, such as EMLA® (lidocaine-prilocaine), Maxilene® (lidocaine) and Ametop® (tetracaine).

## At the vaccination center



- **Distraction helps divert attention from a painful procedure before and during the vaccine.**

- Talk about something fun, recite a story;
- Watch a video, listen to music;
- Play with a stress ball or "I spy". in the room.

Some children will want to watch the injection, which can be helpful too.



- **Taking deep breaths can help your child relax before and during the vaccine.**

This technique can also help parents who feel nervous too!

- **Comfort positioning can help reduce your child's distress and fear.**

- Your child can sit upright on their own, while extending their arm out relaxed.
- If your child is younger, they can sit on your lap to feel comforted and secure.
- Some people prefer to be lying down.



- **Avoid using words that refer to pain or could be falsely reassuring such as "it's not going to hurt", "it's almost over" and "it's just a small needle".**

## After the vaccine

- **Remind your child of what went well. Don't forget to offer praise and congratulate them on their efforts.**
- **Do something enjoyable to celebrate together!**

You know your child best.

You can help the healthcare professional enhance the care of your child.



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