



## Reducing Pain During Vaccination

Vaccines help to keep children healthy by protecting them against serious infections. However, vaccinations may be painful and may cause stress for you and your child. It is important that you stay calm and provide encouragement to your child when they are being vaccinated. Some of the tips listed below may also help to reduce your child's fear of injections and pain during vaccinations.

### Tips for Infants

#### Breastfeed

- Breastfeed your baby five minutes before the injection, as well as during and after vaccinations, to reduce pain and to provide comfort.

#### Hold comfortably

- Hold your baby close to your body, in a front-to-front position with both legs exposed. This reassuring close contact can help to reduce pain.

#### Offer sugar water

- For babies 12 months old or less, who are not breastfed, give a few drops of sugar solution (on the tip of the infant's tongue) one minute before the injection. Repeat administration of a few drops of sugar solution just before the injection. The sweet solution provides a few minutes of pain relief during vaccination.
- Purchase a pre-mixed sugar solution at a pharmacy or prepare one at home by mixing 5 mL (one teaspoon) sugar with 10 mL (two teaspoons) water. Do not use honey.
- Never use sugar water at home to calm a fussy or crying baby, as this can lead to tooth decay.
- Feed the baby or give sips of water to clean the baby's mouth after vaccination.



### Tips for Toddlers and Older Children

#### Prepare your child ahead of time

- Read stories about what happens when you visit the doctor.
- Offer an honest explanation about the procedure: Prepare young children (under 4 years old) just before the injection; prepare older children the day before.
- Describe how vaccination will feel (e.g. like a pinch).
- Tell your child what they can do to ease the pain (e.g. sit still, breath deeply, relax the arm).

#### Distract your child

- Draw your child's attention away from the needle. This is one of the best ways that you can help your child.
- Use age-appropriate tactics that may help to distract your child, such as a favourite toy or blanket, a book, music, singing, or telling a joke or a story.
- Tell your child to take a deep breath and to blow it out slowly. Blowing bubbles or blowing on a pinwheel can help also.



## Position your child in an upright position

- Hold your toddler or young children securely in a comforting hug, sitting upright on your lap, facing forward, or facing you (front to front), with the arm exposed. Lying flat on their back during an injection, or being held too tightly, can be scary for children and can increase their fear.
- Older children can sit alone, with the arm exposed.
- If your child continues to move, ask your healthcare provider about the proper hold technique that is safest for your child.



## Tips for Teens

- Offer helpful distractions such as engaging your teen in a conversation, listening to music with earphones, playing games or texting on a cell phone.



## For older children and teens who are very fearful, consider medications that numb the skin

- Talk to your health care provider about creams such as EMLA® or Ametop® that can help numb the skin. They are available without a prescription.
- Ask your health care provider to show you the right locations to apply the cream. Keep in mind that, on some visits, more than one injection may be given. Read the instructions before applying the product. It must be on the skin 30 to 60 minutes before the injection(s).



*Offering praise and a reward after vaccinations can help children and teens of all ages!*

### Links:

#### Ottawa Public Health:

Phone: 613-580-6744, ext. 24108

Web: [ottawa.ca/immunization](http://ottawa.ca/immunization)

Email: [immunization@ottawa.ca](mailto:immunization@ottawa.ca)

#### CHEO:

For more information contact Dr. Denise Harrison:

[dharrison@cheo.on.ca](mailto:dharrison@cheo.on.ca)

#### Sick Kids Toronto:

[www.aboutkidshealth.ca/pain-free-injections](http://www.aboutkidshealth.ca/pain-free-injections)



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