



Parent's Guide - Tips for Helping Toddlers with Fear of Needles & Immunization

Kids get many shots throughout their early life, including standard vaccines and annual flu jabs. Still, the experience can be challenging for babies and toddlers. Parents can play an active role in changing your child's attitude. **What parents say and do before, during, and after the vaccination appointment can help to calm the children, reduce their fears, and ensure that they develop a positive attitude towards it in the future.**



Helping Toddlers with Fear of Needles & Immunization



Before the Visit

Be Honest & Calm When Preparing Your Child

- ★ Kids are smart and sensitive, so take time to explain in simple terms what to expect before the appointment. Use words that create a positive story about their experience.
- ✓ If you have a toddler or preschooler, be honest with him/her. Explain what a shot is and what he/she can expect at the doctor's office. You can tell him/her there will be a quick poke and that the pain he/she will feel should be over in a second.
- ✓ Use neutral words like "pinch" or "poke" rather than "pain" or "shot".
- ✓ Even if your baby can't understand your words, your calm voice will be reassuring.
- ★ Try your best to stay calm, beware that children take their emotional cues from their parents — and even the youngest babies will be able to sense your fear and anxiety.

Make a Coping Plan that Helps Your Child Feel More in Control

- ★ Even though it's not always possible to plan your child's day ahead, try to schedule the appointment at a time when you know he/she will be well rested and fed.
- ★ Arrange your "talk" the day before or in the morning of your visit, so your little one doesn't have a chance to build up anxiety over several days.
- ★ Bring anything your toddler finds comforting, like a favorite toy, small blanket, or book, to help him/her focus on something pleasant.



During the Visit

Let Them Know You Are Here & Understand Their Worries

- ★ When your toddler is getting his/her shot, you can:
 - ✓ Ask "Do you want to sit on my lap, or by yourself?"
 - ✓ Acknowledge your child's feelings e.g. "It's okay to feel nervous or worried. I'm here for you."
 - ✓ Cuddle your little one as you sing or talk softly and soothingly.
 - ✓ Try to keep smiling and maintain eye contact so he/she looks at you instead of the needle.

Use Distractions to Help Your Little One Relax

- ★ Let your child choose what he/she wants to do as a distraction before and during the injection. Ideas include telling a story, reading a book, singing a song or watching funny videos. Keep the distraction going after the vaccine is given.
- ★ For older kids (aged 3 or above), you can take deep breaths with them to help "blow out" the pain. It calms them down and lowers their body's reaction to pain.



After the Visit

Comfort & Praise Your Child After the Shot

- ★ Your toddler might yell or scream after the shot. The best way to soothe is using a soft, calm voice and providing support to him/her.
- ★ Make your child feel heard and help them cope at the same time. You can say, "I know that was scary and I'm really proud of you for getting through it!" and "We get vaccines because they protect you from getting sick and keep you healthy".
- ★ Praise your little one to recognize his/her courage and effort for overcoming the fear and challenge.





Parent's Guide - Tips for Easing Child's Fears of Needles E-Version of Tips (Vaccination / Blood Test / Medical Procedure)

Most children are fearful of needles. But for some children, this fear is more serious. It is not uncommon for children to have increasing fear and anxiety when having vaccination, blood test and medical procedures. And it will not get any easier until they get support from their carers (parents / professionals). But, what can parents do to help prepare children for easing their fears of needles? Here are some tips to improve your child's experience.



Tips for Easing Child's Fears of Needles



Before the Visit

Prepare Your Child for the Visit

- ★ Start talking to your child about the upcoming appointment a few days in advance.
- ★ Give a simple description of the procedure through play activities (e.g. use a toy syringe on a stuffed animal, read a story/watch a video about a child getting vaccinated together) will allow parents to make the experience more positive for the child.

Be Honest with Your Child to Ease His/Her Feelings and Uncertainty

- ★ Invite children to share what they have heard about and listen to their responses. Be patient, let them know that they can always talk to you about their concerns.
- ★ Communicate with your child honestly, like "It will hurt slightly for a very short time and then it will be done."



During the Visit



Respect Your Child's Feeling

- ★ Allow children to express their emotions even if they are sad or tearful. They will be more open to your support, knowing that their feelings are being heard.
- ✔ Listen to the children without judgment. Do not ignore their expressions such as "needles are scary" or scold them for not "being brave". This will make them feel ashamed and even lead to more negative behaviors.
- ✔ Acknowledge your child's feelings, e.g. "It's okay to feel nervous or worried. I'm here for you."
- ✔ Remain calm during the communication. Since children take emotional cues from adults, being calm will help your child reduce anxiety.

Use Distraction to Help Your Child Relax

- ★ Let your child choose items to bring with. This will keep him/her distracted and increase the sense of security.



After the Visit

Comfort and Praise Your Child

- ★ Hug, congratulate and reward your child after injection.
- ★ Praise your child to recognize his/her courage and effort for overcoming the fear and challenges.

