

Reducing the Pain and Anxiety of Vaccination in Children

Vaccination,
the best protection

November 2017

Most vaccines are administered with a needle, which may frighten both children and their parents. There are proven methods for reducing the pain and anxiety in children who need to get vaccinated.

The following tips and advice will allow you to make the vaccination experience more positive for your child. You can use more than one method to obtain the best results.

Preparing Children for Vaccination

Children old enough to understand can be prepared for vaccination. Here are some tips on how to prepare your child a few hours before the vaccination appointment:

- Discuss the vaccination with your child and answer his or her questions. Explain why the vaccine is needed. Mention, for example, that it is important for keeping him or her healthy.
- Describe to him or her how the vaccination appointment will proceed.
- Never use vaccination as a punishment for your child.
- Do not tell your child that the injection will be painless. Instead, explain that he or she will feel a stinging, tingling or pinching sensation and that it will not last long.

Be Calm and Reassuring

- Stay calm and smile, and talk in your normal voice.
- Avoid apologizing and using words that refer to pain. Doing so will only scare your child further.
- If you feel anxious, take a deep, slow breath to help you relax and keep calm.
- After the vaccination, hug, congratulate and reward your child.

Breastfeed your Baby

If you are breastfeeding your baby, you can do so during the vaccination to calm and reassure him or her. Research shows that babies do not associate the pain of vaccination with being breastfed.

Give your Baby a Sugar Solution

If your baby is less than 2 years old, you can give him or her a sugar solution 1 to 2 minutes before the injection. This is a proven method for relieving pain in children of this age. The sugar solution must be used **only** as a way of relieving pain during vaccination. If you plan on breastfeeding your child during the vaccination, do not give him or her a sugar solution before the injection.

To learn more, visit: sante.gouv.qc.ca/vaccination.

Hold your Child in the Proper

- Hold your child on your knees in the position indicated by the person who is administering the vaccination. Make sure that your child is comfortable.
- Put your arms around your child, but do so gently; holding your child tightly might make him or her more anxious.

Distract your Child

Distracting your child while he or she is being vaccinated can help reduce pain and anxiety. The part of the brain associated with pain is less active when children are distracted.

Guiding principles:

- There are many methods of distraction. Use methods that are suitable for your child's age (such as singing a song, looking at pictures, playing with a toy or a finger puppet or blowing bubbles).
- Choose a distraction that will allow your child to use several senses (such as sight, touch and hearing). Encourage him or her to participate actively.
- Keep in mind that the methods you use to distract your child must never get in the way of the person who is administering the vaccine.

(see verso)

Reducing the Pain and Anxiety of Vaccination in Children *(continued)*

Relieving Pain and Reactions Caused by Vaccination

- Before vaccination, you can use a **topical anesthetic** (such as Emla® cream or patch) to reduce pain caused by the needle. Topical anesthetics numb the skin.
- **Analgesics** (such as Tylenol®) help bring down fever and relieve pain. They can be used after vaccination.

If necessary, talk to your doctor, pharmacist or the person who administered the vaccine.

For more information, visit: sante.gouv.qc.ca/vaccination