

# How can you help your child during a medical procedure, such as a blood draw, vaccination or the insertion of an IV?



## THE WORDS WE USE CAN EVOKE EITHER POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE EXPECTATIONS AND FEELINGS

Words stimulate our imagination and can help or harm. For example, talking about your favorite food can make your mouth water. Research has shown that talking about a shot in advance or warning about pain, can result in increased anxiety and pain.

By carefully choosing your words and using positive language, you can actually help your child feel much more comfortable.

It also helps if only one person talks during the procedure. This ensures focused attention and a calm atmosphere. You can decide beforehand who will talk to your child. This can either be you, a nurse, a child life specialist or a doctor.

This brochure explains how you as a parent can use positive words to help your child.

## WHAT CAN YOU SAY?

*"I am here with you and I will help you make sure that everything goes well"*

*"While you are so busy playing your computer game, you will be surprised to discover how easy it will be for you today"*

*"You have received magic cream (EMLA) so it will be even easier"*

*"Mum/Dad is talking to you about that wonderful holiday in ....., so the doctor can do his/her job well".  
"Do you remember when we were on the campsite, what colour tent did we have ...?"*

*While playing a game: "Wow, you are doing that so well" or "Come, let's go find Wally, then the doctor can do his/her job well"*

### What better not to say?

*It's going to hurt a bit*

*Don't cry*

*Don't be such a baby*

*It doesn't hurt*

*Here comes the shot*

### Afterwards, focus on what went well, such as:

*"Wow – it was wonderful that you were sitting so still. It really helped the nurse start your IV"*

*"You can be very proud that you did that so well"*

*"You have made such a beautiful drawing in the meantime"*

Children will remember that it was a more positive experience because they did it right. It gives them confidence for the next time. Do not apologize or criticize afterwards! Avoid:

*"That was horrible for you, I know it hurts"*

*"You behaved like a baby"*

*"Big boys/girls don't cry"*

# WHAT YOU CAN DO DURING THE PROCEDURE:

## KEEP A CALM AND POSITIVE ATTITUDE

### Why?

Your fear is contagious. If you are calm, your child will also be more relaxed. It is important that you remain calm before, during and after the procedure.

### How do you do that?

- Stay with your child, be calm and reassuring. Speak in your normal and gentle voice before, during and after the procedure.
- To help yourself stay calm, take a few slow, deep breaths before, during and after the procedure. You can also do this together with your child - pretending to blow out a candle or blowing bubbles.
- If you think managing this will be difficult for you, discuss this with the doctor, medical provider, child life specialist or nurse in advance. They can help you.



## DISTRACT YOUR CHILD

### Why?

Distraction: The brain cannot pay attention to everything at the same time. For example: think about your feet in your shoes. You will feel that you are wearing shoes. But you did not consciously feel that just a few moments before.

By directing your child's attention towards something fun other than the procedure, your child will have less fear, less pain, and feel more in control.

### How do you do that?

Distract your child before, during and after the procedure. For instance by singing together, talking about your favorite holiday/hobby/sports/game/TV program/book, or maybe by reading, blowing bubbles, playing a (search) game, toys, iPad/phone, or a topic that they are studying at school.

The more involved your child is in the distraction, the better it works. Keep your child's attention on the distraction. If you are in the hospital, a child life specialist or a (pediatric) nurse may be available to help distract your child. Ask and perhaps you can organize this in advance.

Some children really want to watch and follow the procedure.

Then you can say: ***"This is going well, isn't it? As you relax even more each time you breathe out, it will go even better, even quicker"***. Taking longer to exhale or breathe out will help make your child more relaxed. As a result, he/she will be less anxious and experience less pain. Breathing in and out together, slowly, will help your child to stay more relaxed during the procedure.



# WHAT CAN YOU DO AT HOME TO PREPARE FOR A PROCEDURE SUCH AS A VACCINATION OR BLOOD DRAW?

Preparation is key. Where does it take place? Who's going to do it? Is there a video about it? For example, about the hospital or about the blood draw?

- What makes your child feel comfortable?
- Does your child get to determine what happens and when, or is it better if you decide this? (who is in charge?)
- Where does he/she prefer to be injected, for instance?
- Which position is best, sitting on your lap or lying down?
- Can you apply a numbing cream such as EMLA at home?
- What normally helps your child when he/she feels anxious? Distractions like reading a story together, playing a game or a movie?
- Make a plan together with your child.

What can you say in preparation for a procedure, such as an IV, vaccination or blood test?

*What will happen?*

*"They will put some medicine in your arm to make you good at fighting off germs."*



*What will it feel like?*

*"Some children feel some pressure, others say they feel a pinch. Other children don't feel anything. I am curious what it will be like for you"*

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