Non-drug Pain Control for Kids

The health care staff at American Family Children’s Hospital, University of Wisconsin Hospital, and all UW Health Clinics believes that all of our patients deserve a good experience when they visit their doctor’s office. The best way to do this is to decrease or avoid the amount of pain a patient feels during those visits. Children are exposed many times to needles during childhood. They may have immunizations, blood draws, or even IVs placed. Needle fears can last a lifetime if pain or anxiety is a major part of these experiences.

How can a parent or support person help?
Not knowing what to do to help your child can be very stressful. Here are some ideas that we hope you may find helpful.

Be with your child
We suggest that you to be in the room, to hold, and to comfort your child during painful times.

The stress that a child feels before and during a painful event will increase the amount of pain felt. Children tend to feel less pain when a support person is with them. Having a support person will decrease the amount of stress and pain.

Be calm
A child can sense your anxious feelings. Your calm voice, words, and presence can help your child feel less anxious and fearful.

Help your child get into a helpful position
Here are some options:

- **Sitting on Lap**
  - Helpful with infants and school-age kids
  - Child sitting on adult’s lap
  - Child’s legs can be tucked between adult’s legs
  - Hugging and hand holding is encouraged
  - Child can watch what is going on or focus on something else

- **Chest to Chest Hugging Hold**
  - Child can sit on lap or table
  - Child can focus on something else
  - View is blocked with the hold, a book, or a toy

- **Sitting Beside Support Person**
  - Can sit in chair or on bed
  - Can choose to watch or focus on something else
  - May use book or toy to block view

- **Lying down**
  - Adult is behind or at side of the child
  - Adult can hug or hold if needed
  - Child can watch what is going on or focus on something else
  - May have another staff gently hold knees.
Help your child focus on something else
Changing your child’s focus from a painful event to something else can be very helpful. Getting your child engaged in playing with a toy, searching for specific items in a picture, or reading a book is great.
Bringing items from home that comfort your child can also be very helpful. A special blanket, pacifier, toy, or books are a few items to think about bringing with you.
Allow your child to be as involved in the process as they want to be. Some children may actually find it less stressful if they have the option of watching the needle and looking away when they want to.

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<tr>
<th>Age of Child</th>
<th>Ideas to Try</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-4 months of age</td>
<td>Swaddling-wrapping baby snugly in blanket with arms and legs tucked, Shushing—making calm soothing noises using “shhh” sounds, Sucking--breastfeeding, bottle, pacifier, sugar water* , Buzzy Bee</td>
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<tr>
<td>4-12 months of age</td>
<td>touching, stroking, patting, rocking, playing music, light up toys, Buzzy Bee</td>
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<tr>
<td>1-4 years of age</td>
<td>Puppet play, storytelling, interactive books – especially ones with flaps and buttons, deep breathing, blowing bubbles, music, singing, movies, light up toys</td>
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<td>4 - 6 years of age</td>
<td>Deep breathing, telling a story, puppet play, music, singing, TV, talking about favorite places, TV shows, activities, interactive books such as I-Spy</td>
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<td>6 - 11 years of age</td>
<td>Music, deep breathing, counting, eye fixation (stare at an object without blinking), humor – make the child laugh, music, video games, talking about favorite places</td>
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<td>12 year old and older</td>
<td>Music, movies, video games, squeezing a stress ball, talking about things the child enjoys, or just ask the child</td>
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*only use a few sugar water drops on the tongue or 1-2 dips of pacifier into the sugar water—too much can cause baby to have diarrhea

Buzzy Bee
Recently a new device created to help with the pain of needle related procedures. Buzzy Bee combines the use of vibration and cold to decrease or eliminate needle stick pain. The device works best, for most people, when placed near the site of the needle stick. But, that is not always possible. It is also beneficial when placed at other sites, even on the opposite arm or leg. It is believed to work because the vibration and cold from Buzzy work to block the pain signal from getting to the brain. If a child is afraid of bees, Buzzy also comes in plain black or as a ladybug.
More information can be found and devices ordered at: www.buzzy4shots.com.

Choose your words wisely
The words you use make an impact. Praise the child; identify specific helpful behaviors before, during, and after any painful event. Let the child know when it is “all done.” Allow the child to express his/her feelings about what just happened. Apologizing to the child that the painful event needs to take place, criticizing, and giving complete control to the child are not helpful. They may cause more distress to the child and decrease the child’s level of cooperation. Below you will find words and phrases to avoid and those that can be helpful.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phrases that might help</th>
<th>Phrases to avoid</th>
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<tr>
<td>“Tell me how it feels.”</td>
<td>“This feels like a bee sting.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Some children say they feel a warm feeling. How did it feel to you?”</td>
<td>“The medicine will burn.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Other kids tell me it feels like…”</td>
<td>“Sorry”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“When I count to three, blow the feeling away from your body.”</td>
<td>“Be a big boy/girl!”</td>
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<td>“That was hard.”</td>
<td>“Don’t cry.”</td>
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**FAQs**

“My 2 month old is coming in for his immunizations next week. I’m afraid of needles, how can I make this better for my child.”

Immunizations are given in the thighs. Many babies like swaddling, and you can swaddle a baby on top and leave the legs exposed. A pacifier or breastfeeding (sucking is very comforting) or even your little finger can be very soothing to babies. After the injection, using a soothing voice (making a “shushing” sound) and swaying back and forth will help to calm the baby after his or her shots. If you don’t know how to swaddle, ask someone on your child’s health care team to show you.

“I’ve decided to give my 1st grader a flu shot this year and he can’t get the mist because of his asthma. I’ve tried using distraction in the past with books and singing, but he’s already afraid before we walk through the door. What else can I do to help him through this?”

For this age, flu shots are usually given in the upper arm. Holding your child chest to chest in a hug can be both comforting and allow you the best position for helping him stay still during the shot. Using cold packs prior to the injection and also Buzzy Bee can provide skin stimuli to distract the brain from the pain of injection. Buzzy and the ice packs don’t even necessarily need to be at the site of injection, they can be placed anywhere even on the opposite side of the body. Even though books didn’t work in the past, talking about something that has recently happened and engaging him in the story may be a good alternative to the storybook.

“My teenager doesn’t remember ever having her blood drawn and is nervous about having blood drawn next week. How can I help them be prepared the day of and prevent becoming an adult like me who is afraid of needles?”

It’s important to avoid talking about your own fears but rather talk honestly about the relatively small amount of pain it will actually be, (the tourniquet may be the most uncomfortable part of the procedure in reality) and how short a duration it will be. Encourage your teen to bring distraction items such as video games, music or a good book and any technology items that support that. One medication option that we like to recommend even for short procedures or pokes is L.M.X4. LMX4 is a topical over the counter ointment available at any pharmacy that numbs the skin and is a very good tool for pain management. It is applied to the area of the skin where the needle will go in twenty to thirty minutes prior to the procedure.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person’s health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 9/2016 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing HF#6835.