

Supporting your Child through a Brief Medical Procedure

Helping Parents, Children and Youth



Did you know...

- Common brief medical procedures can be upsetting and distressful for children, youth and even you.
- These procedures can be necessary for your child. They may include an intravenous line for fluid or medication administration, a blood or urine test, wound or fracture repair, or medical imaging (eg x-ray).
- There are simple strategies to help your child get through these procedures.
- Combining different strategies will help your child even more!



Before a procedure

- **Some procedure can be avoided... sometimes.**

- If your child has a gastroenteritis or another viral infection, hydrate them well using diluted apple juice or rehydration solution. Administer small and frequent quantities. This will reduce the risk of requiring an intravenous line to rehydrate your child.
- If your baby needs a sterile (clean) urine test, a catheter may be necessary to administer the test. However, a newer and more comfortable procedure may be available. Ask your healthcare provider if it would be appropriate for your child: <https://babyology.com.au/health/baby-health/wee-search-theres-better-way-get-urine-sample-babies/> or <http://www.urgencehjs.ca/savoirs/prelevement-durine-clean-catch-chez-la-fille-inf/>.
- Many clean cuts to the face can be glued with medical glue to avoid stitches. Do not hesitate to ask the healthcare provider if this solution may be used instead of stitches.

- **Prepare yourself and your child.**



- Have a discussion with your child about where you are going and how people there will help feeling better.
- Help your child reducing their fear of the doctors and nurses by staying composed yourself.



- If you have time before leaving home, pack a bag with your child's favorite toys for distraction during the procedure.
- If you didn't have time to pack anything, ask if toys, games or books are available on site to distract your child during the procedure.

- **While waiting, help reducing anticipation and fear by using distraction.**



- Have them listen to their favorite music.



- Talk about their favorite activities.
- Talk about a recent fun event.

- **Be part of the care**



- Treat pain with acetaminophen or ibuprofen. If your child suffers a limb injury, ibuprofen is favored in a child older than 6 months (if no contraindication such as kidney disease). This will make it easier to help your child.













- Before a needle procedure, if time permits, ask if a numbing cream (such as Emla or Maxilene cream) would be appropriate. This can reduce the pain related to needles such as blood work, injections, vaccines, and intravenous lines. Skin cooling spray can be used in children over 3 years old.



- If a finger prick is planned, warm the fingers of your child.
- If you are breastfeeding, consider breastfeeding your baby before and after a needle is administered. Ask your healthcare provider if it is possible to continue during the procedure.
- If your child is less than 1 year old, ask if sucrose (sugar water) is available. Sucrose can help reduce the pain of babies related to procedures even more if you use it with a soother. You can also prepare your own solution: Mix 1 teaspoon of sugar (1 restaurant packet of sugar) in 2 teaspoon of water and dissolve it well. Be ready to give it at the time of procedure.




During a procedure

- **Help your child to collaborate with your treating team.**
- **If possible, have a caregiver to support your child going through the procedure.**
 - In some centre, a Play therapist can help give support.
- **Help your child stay in a comfortable position.**
 -  ○ Younger children can sit on your lap for some procedures, using a hugging hold.
 -  ○ Babies can be held in a "kangaroo position" on your chest or wrapped securely in a blanket. Breastfeeding can be used for some procedures such as heel prick or vaccination. Sucrose can be used with a soother if breastfeeding is not possible. Give sucrose 1-2 minutes before the procedure and repeat during the procedure, a few drops at a time, with a syringe.
- **Use distraction to help your children having their mind away from the procedure. Distraction can reduce their distress and help them feel better.**
 -  ○ Tell a story. Bring them into an imaginary world.
 -  ○ Discuss a nice activity that your child enjoyed.
 -  ○ Play a "Search and Find" game.
 - Have them play their favorite game.
 - Use your cell phone to play music, videos or games.
 - Sing a song to your child.
- **Use relaxation techniques with older children and youth.**
 -  ○ Ask your child to take deep breaths and to blow it out slowly. Blowing bubble and pinwheels can make it fun!
- **Avoid words that could be confusing to your child.**
 -  ○ Avoid saying "It's over" when the procedure is still ongoing.
 -  ○ Avoid saying "I'm sorry" as you are doing the best for your child.
Prefer to:
 -  ○ Use encouragement and humour.
 -  ○ Stay as calm and relaxed as possible and use a soothing voice.



After a procedure

- **Help your child think of something else as they go through the next steps.**
 -  ○ Hold, cuddle, rock and/or breastfeed your baby; cuddle your child.
 - Help your older child to see the positive side of the process.
 - Comfort your child with their favorite toys, teddy bear or blanket.

**You know your child the best:
help your healthcare provider giving the best care to your child.**