



NEEDLES DON'T HAVE TO HURT

We've teamed up with some of Canada's leading pediatric researchers and clinicians to help make vaccinations easier for you and your child. Tear out this page and keep it handy for your next healthcare visit.

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Keep this timeline handy to make your child's vaccinations easy peasy

A FEW DAYS BEFORE THE NEEDLE	30-60 MINUTES BEFORE THE NEEDLE	RIGHT BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER THE NEEDLE
ALL AGES		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Stay calm and interact normally with your child.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Be honest. Talk with your children about strategies to manage their pain and distress. ➤ Ask children over 10 if they want you to be there for the needle. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Apply numbing creams or patches (topical anesthetics such as EMLA™, AMETOP™, and Maxilene™), available for purchase from pharmacies without a prescription. Follow instructions – product must be applied 30 to 60 minutes before the needle to the area where the needle will go. ➤ Apply cream to multiple areas if your child is having more than one needle. ➤ Ask if you are not sure exactly where on the body the needle will be given. 	<p>BABIES UP TO AGE TWO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Sit upright. Newborns (younger than one month) can be held skin to skin against your chest. Young children can sit on your lap. Hug but don't hold too firmly. <p>Needle location:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Babies under 1 year: upper outer thigh. • Babies 12 months and older: upper arm. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Breastfeed (if possible). If your child unlatches, gently reposition when your child is ready. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Or give sugar water 1-2 minutes before the needle (1 tsp white sugar dissolved into 2 tsp boiled or distilled water). • Or have your child suck a finger or a pacifier.
 <p>TIP:</p> <p>IF MORE THAN ONE NEEDLE IS TO BE GIVEN AT AN APPOINTMENT, ASK THE HEALTHCARE PROVIDER TO GIVE THE MOST PAINFUL VACCINATION LAST.</p> 		<p>CHILDREN TWO TO 17</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Use neutral language rather than drawing attention to pain. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let children/teens know when things are going to start by saying "Ready?" or "Here we go!" • Avoid reassuring (e.g., "It'll be over soon" and "You're OK") as it can increase distress and pain. ➤ Distract by taking their attention away from the pain. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch a video together and ask questions about it. • Encourage listening to music through headphones. • Talk about something fun (e.g., birthday party). • Play with toys that encourage deep breathing, such as blowing a pinwheel or bubbles. ➤ Get support from a registered psychologist if your child has severe needle fear or phobia.
		<p>CHILDREN SEVEN TO 17 WHO FEEL FAINT WHEN GETTING NEEDLES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A simple technique called muscle tension can raise blood pressure and stop these feelings. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask your child to recline or lie down if possible and tighten his/her leg and stomach muscles (not the arm where the needle is going to be given). • Tensing should continue for about 20 seconds until your child is feeling flush in the face. Stop tensing for five seconds (without fully relaxing) before tensing again.

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Evidence summarized by Dr. Christine Chambers, Dr. Meghan McMurtry, Dr. Noni MacDonald, Dr. Melanie Barwick, Dr. Anna Taddio, Kathryn Birnie and Katelynn Boerner
Adapted from Taddio A., McMurtry CM., Shah V., et al. Reducing pain during vaccine injections: clinical practice guideline. CMAJ 2015;187:975-982.