



## Tips for a tear-free visit to the doctor for immunizations

October 1, 2022

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Article type: [Parent Plus](#)

Topics: [Vaccine/Immunization](#)

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A visit to the doctor to receive a shot can be stressful for both children and parents. But there are things caregivers can do to help children who are afraid of needles.

While you might want to wait until the last minute to tell your child about the shot, it is better to prepare for the doctor's visit ahead of time.

Parents and caregivers can use words that create a positive story about getting an immunization like "pressure," "pinch" and "poke" instead of "pain" or "shot."

Let younger children know the poke will keep them healthy, and tell older kids that vaccines help their body fight harmful infections.

Before heading to the doctor's office, parents and children should make a plan together to help the child feel more comfortable and avoid feeling pain. Then, share the plan with the doctor.

For example, parents can hold children to help them feel safe and keep them still. However, kids should never be held down against their will for medical procedures. To keep babies calm, parents can talk, sing or distract them with toys or sounds.

Other options include:

- **Numbing creams and sprays:** Ask your doctor about over-the-counter or prescription creams, patches or cooling sprays that reduce pain. Follow directions when applying.
- **Vibration:** When the body feels a possible threat, it sends a warning signal to the brain. Using a vibration tool on the skin can stop that signal.

- **Distraction:** Tell your child a story, read a book, sing a song or watch funny videos.
- **Take deep breaths:** Have your child practice taking easy, slow breaths in and out. It calms them down and lowers their body's reaction to pain.
- **Rewards:** Let your child choose a reward (such as ice cream) after the needle poke. Talk about the reward during the procedure to keep the child from focusing on the needle.

Afterwards, talk about everything that went well during the visit and praise your child.

For more tips on preparing a child to receive a vaccine, visit <https://bit.ly/3zIXpqG>.

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