



Four steps for a “pawsitive” vaccination experience

1 Prepare

Be calm and prepare yourself. Tell your child about the procedure ahead of time, depending on your child and their age. The younger the child, the less preparation time, prepare older children a day or more before so there is time to plan, but not much time to worry, you can also bring a small ice pack to help numb the area. Use gentle and simple language that your child will understand. For example:

- We need to give you some medicine to help keep you healthy, but it also helping take care of others too.
- The health care provider will give you medicine that is called a vaccine.
- The medicine goes into your arm with a small needle, because it is not the kind you can eat or drink.
- It's important for you to stay still as a statue and make your arm feel like a bowl of jello. (What colour jello would you be?)
- There may be a pinch for a few seconds. It bothers some kids, but others think it is OK.
- The medicine may make your arm feel warm and tingly.
- Your nurse will give you a band-aid after and you will hang out for a little bit to make sure you are feeling well.
- Have your child pick a comfort toy, teddy bear or bring a blanket from home.
- Have your child wear a t-shirt to make their arm easily accessible.

2 Provide distraction and choices

Distraction:

Distraction is a way to support children during medical procedures by offering an alternative focus. It can also decrease a child's perception of pain.

Ideas

- Play dough
- A stress ball
- Watching a video
- An I-spy book
- Playing I-spy with objects in view
- Listening to a song or story

Choices:

Choices help give a child some control. Be careful to only offer choices that a child can really make. Avoid asking “are you ready?” because that is not a choice the child has.

Examples

- Do you want to sit on your own or be in a loved one's arms?
- You can choose to squeeze play-dough, a stress ball or a loved one's hand.
- Would you like to listen to music or a show?
- You may watch or look away.
- You can take 3 or 6 slow deep breaths.

3 Try using comfort positions

A secure comfort hold from a caregiver or staff member can provide safety, security and comfort when receiving a vaccine. Here are three comfort positions to try.



Side hug, securing the child's arms close to their body.



Back to front hug, keeping the child's arms and legs still.



Front to front hug holding the child's head and body as their arms are tucked in.

All of these comfort positions give the adult the chance to talk softly in the child's ear or sing a song.

“You are holding so still. Good job.” or “I can see this is hard, I am right here for you.”

4 Support and closure

End

“Its all done!”

Encourage

“You did it! You got your vaccine to help keep your body healthy.”

Acknowledge

“You did such a great job sitting still. You must be proud of yourself. I am proud of you too.”

Effects

“Some children say that shaking their arm out helps.”

Explore

A new toy, activity or sticker