

Ways to reduce fear of needles or pain from needles

Most vaccines, including the COVID-19 vaccine, are given with a needle. Some people are afraid of needles, which can make it hard to get vaccinated. Here are some evidence-based strategies to improve the vaccination experience for children and adults.

FOR PARENTS



- Explain the process using words your child will understand
- Be honest and neutral about how the vaccine will feel. For example: “You may feel some pressure or a poke on your arm”
- Explain why the vaccine is important: It will help protect you and your family
- Say what you will do to manage pain or fear. For example: play a game or hold a toy
- Think about using a numbing cream or gel. In Canada, these products are available over the counter or you can speak with your health care provider. This will need to be applied 30 to 60 minutes before the needle



- Stay positive and calm
- Hold your child on your lap or touch them to provide comfort
- Encourage them to relax their arm and let it feel loose and jiggy like cooked spaghetti
- Distract them with songs, jokes, toys, bubbles or mobile devices



- Congratulate them
- Ask your health care provider which medications you can give your child to help manage the common side effects like sore muscles and mild fever

FOR EVERYONE

The **CARD (comfort, ask, relax, distract)** system outlines strategies that can help make your and your children's vaccination experience better.

COMFORT

- Sit upright and relax your arm
 - If you have a history of fainting, squeeze your knees together or ask to lie down
- Wear a short sleeve shirt
- Bring a comfort item such as a blanket or a stuffed toy

ASK

- What will happen?
- What will it feel like?
- Can I have privacy?
- Can I use a numbing cream to dull the pain?

RELAX

- Bring a support person
- Take slow, deep breath
- Engage in positive self-talk

DISTRACT

- Talk to someone
- Play on your phone
- Listen to music

YOU CAN ALSO

Talk to your health care provider about your fears

Use traditional methods like smudging, prayer and spending time on the land to prepare yourself mentally and physically for your vaccine

Ask if the vaccine can be administered in a private place

RELATED LINKS

[Vaccines for children: What to expect at the vaccination appointment](#)
[Preventing fear of needles among patients](#)



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