



IMPROVING THE VACCINATION EXPERIENCE:

A guide for parents and caregivers

The **CARD system (Comfort, Ask, Relax, Distract)** provides groups of strategies that can be used before and during vaccination to make the experience a more positive one for you and your child. Learn how you and your child can **play your cards** to reduce the pain, stress and worries associated with vaccinations.

To learn more about CARD, go to CardSystem.ca.



COMFORT

How you can play your Comfort CARD

Get comfortable for vaccination.

- Prepare yourself for vaccination. It can be normal to feel nervous. It is useful to use comfort strategies for things we can control. Know why vaccination is recommended, what to expect and plan ways you can get comfortable.
- Prepare your child. Give your child information about the vaccination and why they are getting it. Tailor the information to your child's needs – as little or as much as they want to know. Use the fact sheets on [what to say](#), [how you can act](#) and [what you can do](#) to promote coping and a more positive vaccination experience for your child.
- Find out what coping strategies your child wants to use and how they want you to help. Then plan for them ahead of time (e.g., distraction items, positive self-talk, [comfort positioning](#), [topical anesthetics](#)).
- Topical anesthetics are medicines that temporarily numb the skin and reduce the pain from the needle poke. They are sometimes called numbing creams. They can be purchased from a pharmacy.

How your child can play their Comfort CARD

Encourage your child to prepare for vaccination day. Some things they can do to feel comfortable are:

- Choose a comfort item to bring such as a favourite toy.
- Pick a short-sleeved shirt or loose-fitting shirt that lets their upper arm be reached easily.



ASK

How you can play your Ask CARD

Make sure your questions are answered so you can be informed and prepared.

Some questions you can ask include:

- Why is this vaccine recommended?
- What will happen? What will it feel like?
- How will my child's preferences be accommodated?

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How your child can play their Ask CARD

Invite your child to ask questions to help them be more prepared for their vaccination. If you can, answer your child's questions or search for the information together. If your child does not seem interested or is not ready to talk, that is OK. Tell them they can always come to you if they have questions. To help your child be more prepared for their vaccination they can ask questions such as:

- What will happen? What will it feel like?
- Can I bring a friend or family member?
- Can I have privacy?
- Can I use a numbing cream to dull the pain?
- Can I lie down?



RELAX

How you can play your Relax CARD

Your actions and words can influence your child's reaction. Foster a calm environment and be positive. If you are calm and use your normal voice, your child will feel that everything is OK.

- Think of things that normally keep you relaxed.
- If you are nervous, take deep belly breaths. Do this by taking slow deep breaths into your belly, breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth.

How your child can play their Relax CARD

Encourage your child to stay calm and relaxed. To help prepare your child for their vaccination they can:

- Practice relaxation techniques such as deep breathing.
- Practice positive self-talk (tell yourself you can handle this).
- Practice relaxing their arm and making it loose and jiggly.



DISTRACT

How you can play your Distract CARD

Try to limit the amount of time you are focused on the vaccination if it is making you nervous or worried.

How your child can play their Distract CARD

Encourage your child to limit the amount of time they are focusing on the vaccination if it is making them nervous or worried.

- If your child is interested in being distracted, they can use this strategy to take their mind off the vaccination.
- It does not matter what the distraction is, as long as your child is actually distracted. Involve your child in choosing the distraction they want to use. It could be a game on a smartphone, a video, a funny joke, a [search and find activity](#) or talking.