

## A Guide for Parents

### Why is vaccination pain a concern?

- Most vaccines are given with a needle. This can be painful and frightening for children.
- Pain can cause a child to develop a fear of doctors, nurses and needles.
- Some parents and children delay or stop vaccinations because of pain and fear. This can leave children without protection from serious diseases.

### Plan ahead to reduce pain

- Read this guide to learn about **3 ways you can reduce pain during vaccinations**. These methods are proven to be safe and effective for kids and teens. You can **combine the different methods for better results**.
- Plan what you will do for your child's next vaccination. Carry this card with you and pack any supplies you will need ahead of time. Tell your child's health care provider so they can help you.
- With children 4 years or older, talk ahead of time about:
  - 1) What will happen: "You will get a medicine to keep you healthy. The medicine is called a vaccine and it goes in your arm with a needle."
  - 2) How it will feel: "There may be a pinch or some pushing for a few seconds."
  - 3) What you will do to manage discomfort: "It bothers some kids but other kids think it is OK. We are going to do some things to help you so that it is OK for you too." (Then discuss what you will do.)
  - 4) What your child will do: "You can help by choosing a toy to bring."
- If you plan to use a topical anaesthetic to numb the skin, apply the product at home or at the clinic. Topical anaesthetics can be purchased at a pharmacy without a prescription.
- After your child's vaccination, judge how much pain your child had. You can observe your child's: body movements (calm or thrashing?), face (normal or locked in a grimace?), and sounds (silent or high-pitched cry?) Children 4 years and older can report their own pain: no pain, a little bit, medium, or a lot.
- Use what your child tells you and what you see to plan what you will do to reduce your child's vaccination pain the next time.
- Bring your child's immunization record to track and plan your child's next vaccination.
- For more information and to see a video, visit <https://immunize.ca/pain-management-children>



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### 1. What you can give

#### TOPICAL ANAESTHETICS

- In Canada, you can buy topical anaesthetics (numbing creams and numbing patches) without a prescription. Available products include: EMLA™ (lidocaine-prilocaine), Ametop™ (tetracaine), and Maxilene™ (lidocaine).
- They dull pain where the needle enters your child's skin. They are safe for children of all ages, even babies.
- You have to wait for topical anaesthetics to take effect. Apply to injection site between 30 and 60 minutes **before** the needle, according to manufacturer instructions.
- Topical anaesthetics are usually applied to the upper arm. Confirm the location with your child's health care provider. If your child is getting more than one needle, apply to both arms.
- Remove the medicine after the waiting time. Your child's skin may appear whiter or redder than normal. This is OK and will go away.
- Allergic skin reactions are rare. If there is a rash, talk to your child's health care provider about it. It could be an allergic skin reaction. If your child experiences an allergic skin reaction, use another product the next time.



### 2. What you can do

#### UPRIGHT POSITIONING

- Have your child sit upright **before, during, and after** the needle. Your child may be held on your lap. This helps your child to feel secure and to stay still.
- Make sure to undress your child to free the arm(s) where the needle will be given.
- *Don't hold your child too tightly - if you do, this can increase your child's distress.*



### 3. How you can act

#### YOUR STATE OF MIND

- Stay with your child, be calm and use your normal speaking voice **before, during, and after** the needle.
- Avoid using reassuring statements like "It'll be over soon" and statements that increase fear like "This is going to hurt", as they bring attention to the procedure and can increase distress and pain.
- If you are nervous, you can take a few slow, deep breaths to calm yourself **before, during and after** the needle. Breathe so your belly expands, not your chest.



#### DISTRACT YOUR CHILD

- Distraction reduces distress and pain in children 12 years of age and younger.
- You can distract your child with videos (for example, mobile devices), toys, music and talking.
- Start distracting your child **before** the needle but distract only when the child is calm enough to do so; otherwise, distress may be increased.
- Keep your child's attention on the distraction. Be prepared to change what you are doing to keep your child distracted.
- *There are a few children that cope better if they watch the needle, so if your child says they want to watch, that's OK too.*

