

Reduce the Pain of Vaccination in Babies

A Guide for Parents

Why is vaccination pain a concern?

- Vaccinations are a routine part of a baby's medical care. They protect a baby from serious diseases.
- Most babies experience pain from vaccinations. Pain can cause a baby to develop a fear of doctors, nurses and needles.
- No parent wants to see a baby in pain. Some parents delay or stop vaccinations because of pain. This can leave a baby without protection from serious diseases.

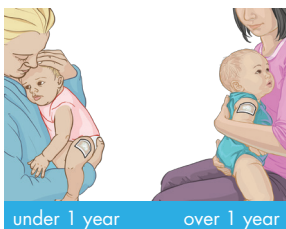
Plan ahead to reduce pain

- Read this guide to learn about **3 ways you can reduce your baby's pain during vaccinations**. These methods are proven to be safe and effective. **You can combine the different methods for better results.**
- Plan what you will do for your baby's next vaccination. Tell your baby's health care provider so they can support your goals.
- Carry this card with your baby's immunization record, and pack any supplies you will need in your baby's diaper bag.
- After your baby's vaccination, judge how much pain your baby had. Observe your baby's:
 - body movements (calm or thrashing?)
 - face (neutral or locked in a grimace?)
 - sounds (silent or high-pitched cry?)
- Use what you see to plan what you will do the next time to reduce your baby's pain.
- To see a video, visit Immunize Canada at <http://immunize.ca/en/parents/pain.aspx>.

1. What you can give

TOPICAL ANAESTHETIC CREAM, GEL OR PATCH

- In Canada, you can buy topical anaesthetics to reduce the pain from needles without a prescription: EMLA™ (lidocaine-prilocaine), Ametop™ (tetracaine), or Maxilene™ (lidocaine).
- They dull pain where the needle enters your baby's skin.
- They are safe for babies, even newborns.
- Apply them at home or at the clinic **before** the needle.
- For babies under 1 year of age, apply to the upper outer part of the leg; for children aged over 1 year, apply to the upper arm. If your baby is getting more than one needle, apply to both legs or both arms.
- If using the patch, just peel off the backing and stick the patch on the skin. If using the cream or gel, squeeze out 1 g (about the size of a 5-cent coin) on the skin and cover it with the dressing provided or with plastic wrap.
- You have to wait for topical anaesthetics to take effect. Leave them on the skin undisturbed for the recommended waiting time: 60 minutes for EMLA™; 45 minutes for Ametop™; and 30 minutes for Maxilene™.
- Remove the medicine after the waiting time. Your baby's skin may appear whiter or redder than normal. This is okay and will go away.
- Allergic skin reactions are rare. If there is a rash, talk to your baby's health care provider about it. It could be an allergic skin reaction.



SUGAR WATER

- You can use sugar water to reduce your baby's pain. Sugar water is safe for babies, even newborns.
- Make sugar water at home or at the clinic by mixing 1 teaspoon of white sugar with 2 teaspoons of distilled or boiled water. For babies over 6 months, you may use tap water if the tap water is safe for drinking.
- Give your baby some sugar water 1 or 2 minutes **before** the needle.
- Use a dropper (or syringe) to place the sugar water into the side of your baby's mouth between the cheeks and gums. Give your baby one drop at a time and let your baby suck on the sweet taste.
- You may also dip a soother (pacifier) into the sugar water and give it to your baby **before, during, and after** the needle.



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2. What you can do

BREASTFEED YOUR BABY

- If you are breastfeeding, start to breastfeed your baby **before** the needle. Make sure you have a good latch. Then continue breastfeeding **during and after** the needle.
- Breastfeeding combines holding, sweet taste, and sucking and is one of the best ways to reduce pain in babies.
- Breastfeeding during needles is safe for babies, even newborns. *There is no evidence that babies will choke or associate their mothers with pain.*
- Undress your baby to free the leg(s) or arm(s) where the needle will be given before you start breastfeeding.
- If your baby cannot breastfeed, hold your baby and use sugar water and a soother.



HOLD YOUR BABY

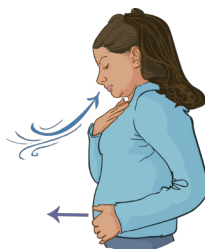
- Position your baby upright and hold your baby close **before, during and after** the needle. This helps your baby to feel secure and to stay still.
- Sit on a chair or lean against the examination table to minimize the risk for accidental falls.
- Make sure to undress your baby to free the leg(s) or arm(s) where the needle will be given.
- Don't hold your baby too tightly. If you do, your baby may get upset.



3. How you can act

YOUR STATE OF MIND

- Try to stay calm, use your normal speaking voice, and be positive **before, during, and after** the needle. This will help your baby stay calm. Babies see and feel what their parents are doing, and often do the same.
- If you are nervous, you can take a few slow, deep breaths to calm yourself. Breathe so your belly expands, not your chest. You can do this while holding your baby.



DISTRACT YOUR BABY

- Taking your baby's focus away from the pain can reduce your baby's pain.
- While holding your baby close, distract with singing, talking, or sucking (breastfeeding or soother) **before, during, and after** the needle. Add rocking your baby back and forth after the needle.
- You may choose to distract an older baby with toys such as bubbles, pop-up books, rattles, or smartphones. If toys do not work, hold your baby close and distract with singing, talking, or sucking (breastfeeding or soother) **before, during, and after** the needle and add rocking your baby back and forth after the needle.
- The way you distract your baby once may not work the next time. Be prepared to change what you are doing to keep your baby distracted.

