

People of all ages may experience stress or anxiety when getting vaccinated. It's important to give patients adequate opportunity to express fears and ask questions. Health care staff can help by suggesting these strategies or encouraging them to use their existing coping skills to reduce anxiety.



DISTRACT:

Reduce stress and ease pain.

- Interact warmly with the patient throughout the appointment.
- Point out interesting things in the room or ask them to count all the blue items they see. Tell a story. Ask them to wiggle their toes or tighten and release muscles in their face, hands, or legs.
- Suggest they play a game, watch a video, listen to music, or imagine their favorite place. Parents can try talking or singing to their child.
- Tell them to take slow, deep breaths during vaccination. Children can blow bubbles (imaginary or real) to help them take big breaths.
- Remind them to stay focused on the distraction strategy if their attention wanders.



COMFORT:

Remain calm and stay positive.

- Reassure them that it may sting, but it will only last a few seconds. (Consider using topical anesthetic before vaccination, if appropriate. Allow for time to take effect.)
- Though a seated position is preferred for vaccination, those with anxiety may lie down. Remind them to relax their arms and shoulders.
- Adults may wish to bring a support person or have a friendly hand to squeeze. Parents may hold their child on their lap during vaccination and cuddle them after.
- Allow children to cry – don't force them to "be brave."
- Reward young patients with a sticker or colorful Band-Aid. Parents may offer to take them to the park or to get a treat.
- Give positive reinforcement—tell them they did something good by protecting themselves and those around them.



EDUCATE:

Manage pain and side effects.

- Inform patients or their parents that they may experience mild side effects that should go away within a few days. This is a normal sign that their body is building immunity.
- Common side effects include soreness, redness or swelling where they got the shot, feeling tired, headache, muscle pain, chills, fever, or nausea.
- Apply a cool, wet cloth to the area to reduce any soreness where the vaccine was administered. Use or exercise the arm.
- Advise on what pain relievers can be used to help alleviate soreness or other side effects. Aspirin is not recommended for children and adolescents. Instead, use acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol) or ibuprofen (e.g., Advil, Motrin).