

Tips from Child Life Specialists on Making Doctor's Visits Easier

Prior to the appointment

- Bring comfort items like stuffed animals, blankets, or favorite books to help your child feel secure
- Read books about visiting the doctor and incorporate medical equipment into play. This familiarizes children and also allows them to ask questions they may have
- Try to schedule during a time when your child is normally calm. Avoid scheduling during naptime, or bring a snack if prior to mealtime

During the appointment

- Bring activities your child enjoys like coloring, books, or electronic devices to help pass the time.
- If your child is nervous around staff, encourage interaction between them. Your child can introduce their stuffed animal to them, or manipulate and practice with medical equipment when safe to do so. (Listen to stethoscope; look in mommy's ears, etc.)
- Use available play items in waiting area
- Use available coping materials, distraction, and breathing techniques if your child is distressed or afraid

What about immunization/shots?

- Avoid using shots as a punishment "if you don't listen, the doctor will give you a shot". Remind kids that shots are a part of growing up and getting bigger, not because they were bad or did anything wrong
- Distraction is the best method in helping children deal with needle related pain and anxiety
- Don't lie about needing a shot, but rather use a calm and direct approach using words like "poke" or "pinch"
- Offering choices for your child helps them feel in control. He/she can choose which arm, what kind of Band-Aid, whose hand to hold, and the way he/she would like to be distracted.

Other tips for distraction

- Young infants: maintain eye contact, sing songs or talk to the baby, smiles and snuggles
- Older infants: utilize distraction items like light up toys or bubbles, sing songs
- Preschoolers and school aged children: use distraction items, use an electronic device to listen to a song, play a game, or watch a video, talk to the child for distraction and provide reassurance
- Older children and teenagers who are nervous about needles can benefit from positive self-talk ("I can do this"), conversation as distraction, or electronic devices

Words matter

Instead of	Try
Don't Cry	It's okay to cry, but you must stay still
It will be okay	I know this is hard for you
It won't hurt	You'll feel a quick pinch
It will be over soon	You're doing great

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