

About COVID-19 Vaccines

Building Vaccine Confidence Through Knowledge



How to prepare a child for their vaccine

Talk to Your Child

Knowing what to expect can help a child prepare for a new experience. Talk to your child before their appointment, and tell them what the appointment is for, and why being vaccinated is important, using simple, age-appropriate language.

Be honest about the appointment and don't avoid mentioning the needle, because being surprised by the needle can cause more distress for your child. Let them know that being afraid of needles is common, but that getting vaccinated will help protect themselves and those they love.

Remember it is just as important for you to remain calm when talking about the vaccine appointment. Children are perceptive and will notice if you are worried, making them worry more. Try to avoid using fearful tones and body language, both when talking about vaccines and while at the appointment. Breathe and speak slowly and calmly to model these behaviours.

After the vaccination, celebrate your child's strengths! "You did an amazing job keeping your arm loose!"

Managing Your Child's Discomfort

If your child is concerned about discomfort, topical numbing creams and patches are available from some pharmacies. Using a numbing cream on the site of the vaccination before the appointment can help temporarily numb the skin and can reduce some vaccination discomfort. Using the numbing cream might provide your child with peace of mind.

Make sure to carefully read the instructions on where to apply, and how long before their appointment, to ensure proper placement and use. Most products should be applied approximately half an hour to an hour before the appointment. The COVID-19 vaccine is administered in the deltoid muscle, so the cream or patch should be applied in the upper portion of the arm, just below the shoulder, on the arm which will receive the vaccination. Babies under 12 months of age receive the COVID-19 vaccine in the thigh. If you are still unsure about where or when to apply the cream or patch, contact your healthcare provider or pharmacy for more information. After the numbing cream has been applied, the skin might appear whiter or redder for a short time, this is normal.



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Distract Your Child

If your child is nervous about needles, knowing what to expect from their appointment may not ease their concerns. Taking their mind off the needle may be the best way to keep them calm, and depending on the age of your child, different options may work.

Here are 6 tricks to distract your child:

- Count backwards from 100, or the highest number they can.
- Listen to music or watch videos on a phone or tablet.
- Bring a book for them to read or have read to them.
- Practice breathing exercises, to help release tension in the body and make needles less uncomfortable. During the vaccination, ask your child to pretend they are “blowing bubbles” or “blowing out birthday candles” or to “take a big breath and make a big belly.”
- Ask your child open questions, such as their opinions on their favourite things, or what they would like to eat for dinner.
- Plan a fun activity or treat for after their appointment and tell them about it, to keep their mind on the future and not on present discomfort.

Holding your child properly during their vaccination appointment will comfort them and allow the vaccinator to properly administer the vaccine.

Keep Your Child Occupied

When you're at the vaccination clinic, you may have to wait in line a bit. You'll also have to stay on site in the observation area for 15 minutes after your child receives their vaccine. Make sure to bring items like their favourite book, toy, or a tablet to keep them occupied while at the clinic.

This tip sheet and other resources are available for download at www.FamiliesCanada.ca

