



My child/teen is fearful of shots/needles, how can I help??

- 1) Be honest!
 - a) Do not trick kids/lie to them about if they're getting a shot
 - b) Yes, it will hurt, but only briefly (DON'T say it won't hurt!)
 - c) Use helpful language (see chart below)

- 2) The adult with the child needs to be CALM and *not* fearful of needles themselves
 - a) Be confident
 - b) Calm/low tone of voice
 - c) Calm/still body
 - d) Support the pediatrician staff

- 3) Offer reward for trying, bigger reward for success (regardless of emotionality)

- 4) Give the child as much control as possible
 - a) Where in the room will it happen (on parents lap? on chair? on exam table?)
 - b) Who do they want with them (Mom? Dad? Sibling? by themselves?)
 - c) Do they want to help (open the wrapper? hold the band-aid?)
 - d) What signal will they give to show they're ready (turn away? nod? thumbs up?)
 - e) What distraction do they want to use (talking? watching movie? playing a game?)

- 5) Practice ahead of time or schedule a visit with one of our psychologists

TABLE 1 Suggested Language for Parents or Health Care Providers

Language to Avoid	Language to Use
You will be okay; there is nothing to worry about (reassurance)	What did you do in school today? (distraction)
This is going to hurt/this won't hurt (vague; negative focus)	It might feel like a pinch (sensory information)
The nurse is going to draw your blood (vague information)	First, the nurse will clean your arm, you will feel the cold alcohol pad, and next ... (sensory and procedural information)
You are acting like a baby (criticism)	Let's get your mind off of it; tell me about that movie ... (distraction)
It will feel like a bee sting (negative focus)	Tell me how it feels (information)
The procedure will last as long as ... (negative focus)	The procedure will be shorter than ... (television program or other familiar time for child) (procedural information; positive focus)
The medicine will burn (negative focus)	Some children say they feel a warm feeling (sensory information; positive focus)
Tell me when you are ready (too much control)	When I count to 3, blow the feeling away from your body (coaching to cope; distraction; limited control)
I am sorry (apologizing)	You are being very brave (praise; encouragement)
Don't cry (negative focus)	That was hard; I am proud of you (praise)
It is over (negative focus)	You did a great job doing the deep breathing, holding still ... (labeled praise)

Words or phrases that are helpful to 1 child may be threatening to another; parents and health care providers should select their language carefully.

* For young kids: Pablo the Puffer Fish app - available free for iOS and Android