

## Ten Ways Parents Can Help Ease the Pain

1. **Gather information.** Know why your child needs a procedure, how the procedure may feel and how long it will last. Sign up for a Pre-Surgical Tour so your child will be familiar with the sights and sounds of an operating room. Call 847.618.4YOU (4968) to register.
2. **Be honest and sensitive.** Explain to your child why s/he needs the procedure and what s/he can expect to feel, see and hear. Be honest with your child about what may hurt and what will not hurt. Try to avoid creating undue concern for your child.
3. **Encourage curiosity and exploration.** Becoming familiar with the health care facility and understanding the equipment that will be used during treatment or diagnosis is very important to a child. Help your child learn about the purpose of the examination and the medical equipment that he or she will come in contact with.
4. **Reassure your child.** Make sure your child knows that the hospital, doctor's office or clinic is not a punishment and it is not necessarily a place where children will experience pain.
5. **Use simple language.** When describing a medical procedure, try to use words that do not have double meanings or are threatening. Use the word "medicine" instead of "drugs," "bed on wheels" instead of "stretcher," and "numb" or "make sleepy" instead of "deadened."
6. **Listen to your child's concerns.** Let your child know that it is okay to ask questions, cry and talk about feelings.
7. **Give your child choices.** Allowing children to take a more active role in the procedure, such as deciding which finger gets stuck with a needle or whether they sit on the examining table or on a parent's lap for a shot, can help lessen anxiety and pain related to painful procedures.
8. **Help your child manage pain.** Many coping strategies can be used to help reduce anxiety and perceptions of pain and discomfort for your child. Teach your child that deep, steady breathing can help him or her cope with pain. Let him or her squeeze your hand and say, "Ouch!" or "That hurts!" Distract your child with books, songs, blowing bubbles, video games, music, etc. to divert attention from anxiety and pain. Let your child know that s/he can ask for a topical medicine which can help minimize the pain and discomfort of needle sticks.
9. **Comfort your child.** Touching is an important part of healing. If medical needs prevent you from holding or rocking your child, you may still stroke your child and hold his or her hand.
10. **When appropriate, encourage play.** Children learn about their world and how to cope by playing. Play gives children control and a way to work out and understand their feelings. Playing with puppets, painting pictures, telling stories, etc. – before and after a procedure – are some meaningful ways to teach children about their health care needs and experiences.

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