



## The Pediatric Care Center, LLC

### Vaccines and Your Child

Your child's visit today may include receiving some immunizations. Our practice feels strongly that immunizations protect children from harmful illnesses and we follow the American Academy of Pediatrics guidelines for giving vaccines

Sometimes children are scared of vaccines or scared of needles. Here are some things to try to help your child deal with these fears since receiving vaccines, obtaining blood work and other tests are necessary during one's lifetime in order to stay healthy. Helping your child deal with these fears will help for the rest of their lives.

**If you have a fear of needles, don't show this to your child.** Realize that this fear is not based in reality. The pain of a needle is actually very minimum.

**Always explain that getting vaccines is a way of staying healthy and you are making sure your child has the best chance to stay healthy because you love them.** Don't ever use "getting a shot" as a punishment threat.

**Always tell the truth. Don't pretend they are not getting a shot, let them know they are and for the good reasons above.** You don't need to tell them too soon as this will lead to more anxiety, it is OK to say "I am not sure you will need shots today, we will have to check." Tell them it will hurt A LITTLE for a SHORT PERIOD OF TIME, LIKE A FEW SECONDS. When it's over, make sure to show them a happy, smiling face to let them know they're all done.

**Some experts suggest applying a numbing cream or spray.** Ask your doctor which brand she recommends. During the vaccination, help distract your child by squeezing his hand, making funny faces, telling a joke or story, playing I Spy, or simply singing his favorite song. Some older children can feel comfortable if allowed to listen to music or watch videos with ear pods.

**If your child is in hysterics, it might be best to step back and allow the nurse or doctor to take over.** Kids overreact to shots sometimes, knowing they'll get a response from their parents (which may lead to you refusing to go through with the shot). If your kid is throwing a tantrum, consider leaving the room briefly so the staff can do their job. Or try standing in the corner of the room and maintaining eye contact with your child, which provides support without getting in the way. Doing so can help speed up the whole process and minimize the painful experience for everyone involved. **But if your child is becoming so upset that they may hurt the staff we may not be able to give the vaccine unless you provide more support. This may entail rescheduling the vaccine so another family member can help hold.**

**Sometimes even a small incentive (like a sticker) can help ease the pain.** A special treat gives your child something to look forward to while also acknowledging his bravery and his boo-boo in a positive way. Or promise your child that after his vaccinations, you'll do something special together, like going bowling or getting an ice cream cone.

If your child is so upset sometimes it is hard to try to get them to relax. In these cases, it is important to start some of the above recommendations BEFORE your appointment. In addition, if your child has an anxious personality these are some relaxation methods that can be done EVERY NIGHT at home for practice so when they are in the office they can use to help face their fears:

#### **Relaxation methods:**

##### **Progressive Relaxation:**

1. Breathe IN through your nose, 1-2-3
2. Breath OUT through your mouth, 1-2-3-4-5
3. For each muscle group: TENSE- HOLD 1.2 – RELAX. Feel the contrast.
4. End by tensing, then relaxing your whole body
5. Think of an IMAGE to help you remember this relaxed feeling
6. Repeat Steps 1 and 2

##### **Rapid Relaxation:**

1. Stop what you're doing
2. Breathe IN and OUT, as above
3. As you breathe out, think of your special IMAGE. Keep it in your mind for as long as you'd like
4. Return to what you've been doing.