



## HELPING

# KIDS



## COPE WITH VACCINES

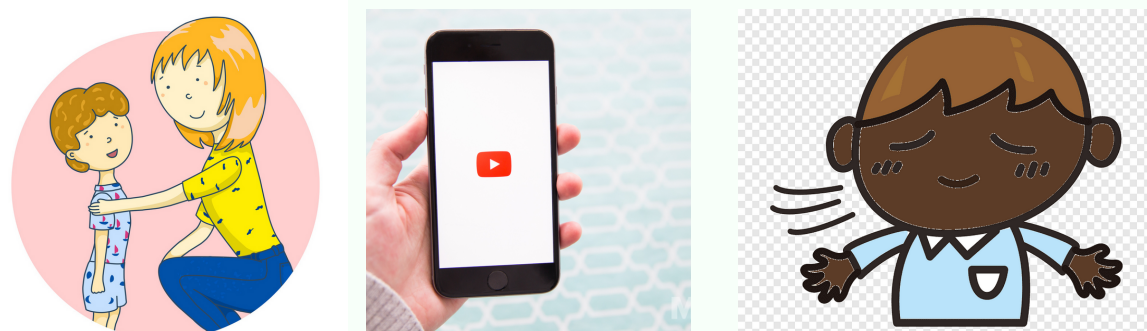


### Physical

#### USE UPRIGHT AND "COMFORT POSITIONS" WITH CAREGIVERS

There is evidence that shows that an upright position, compared to being laid down, reduces fear and pain during medical procedures for kids. Engaging the caregiver to be close to the child allows them to help soothe their fears, and allows the health care professional to safely give the vaccine. Some kids cope better looking at what is happening, where other kids do better looking away. Either way, younger children can sit on their parent(s)'s lap with their caregiver "hugging" tightly to help reduce movement and increase comfort. Older or less anxious children may prefer a hand-hold instead or their caregiver sitting close to them. You can refer to the poster of "comfort positions" for more direction.

### Psychological



#### TRUTH-TELLING (AGE APPROPRIATE), MAKE/USE A "COPING PLAN"

When a child is able to have **honest**, age-appropriate conversations with their caregivers prior to potentially-distressing events, it allows the child feel secure and provides the family an opportunity to come up with a coping plan. When thinking about what words to use, most children appreciate **"sensory" explanations** of what they might see, hear, feel, or smell during the experience. It is recommended that these conversations happen 2-5 days before the event. Younger children often benefit from conversations much closer to the date, whereas children with heightened anxiety may benefit from repeated conversations about how they are going to be supported over a number of days. You can refer to the sample "vaccine script" for more information.

The two best psychological strategies in managing fear and pain related to medical procedures for kids are: **distraction** and **relaxation**. Distraction allows the child to focus away from the event temporarily. Caregivers can utilize comfort items (ie. stuffed animal), electronic devices (ie. youtube video), or a pleasant conversation about an upcoming event to distract. You can prompt a child to relax by telling them to take big belly breaths (ie. pretend blowing birthday candles), or relax the arm like a wet noodle. Having a relaxed parent also helps to reduce a child's fear.

### Pharmacological



#### USE A TOPICAL ANESTHETIC TO NUMB THE AREA TO REDUCE PAIN

Ask a pharmacist at your local pharmacy for **"EMLA"**. Use the direction on the packaging to apply a generous amount of numbing cream on the arm (about 2 fingers-width below the shoulder) **30-60 minutes before** the expected appointment. Cover the cream with saran wrap to keep the cream from smearing. You can let your child know that this cream reduces the "pinch" feeling of a needle/"poke". The numbing effect is different for every child so don't promise that it will take all the "pinch" feeling away, but that most kids say that it takes away a lot of the "pinch" feeling. This cream can be wiped away with tissue prior to injection by parent or health care professional, and the arm can be cleaned and used as usual.