

DIABETES IN CHILDREN AND YOUTH

STRATEGIES FOR INJECTIONS AND FINGER POKES

Where possible, offer choice:

- “Which arm do you want the needle in?”
- “Do you want to watch TV while you get your needle?”
- However, children should not be allowed to choose when the procedure will occur (“Tell me when you’re ready for the needle...”) because they tend to stall when given the opportunity to do so and this increases everyone’s level of stress.

Proceed with a calm, firm, and matter of fact attitude:

- Answer your child’s questions honestly (e.g., “Yes, it might hurt, but you can handle it”).
- Do not apologize for a needle or finger poke – remember, this is being done to help your child.
- Children take their cues from their parents. If you’re anxious or hesitant about your child having a needle, it creates doubt about the procedure for your child as well. Avoid using a lot of reassurance.
- Try to avoid going for needles during times of added stress (e.g., five minutes before the lab closes; prior to a test at school).

Provide clear expectation:

- Children need to understand what behavior is appropriate (e.g., crying is okay) and what behavior is inappropriate (e.g., hitting, calling names, and running away are not okay).
- Inappropriate behavior requires a consequence – children need to be aware of the consequence ahead of time and parents need to follow through with putting it in place if necessary.
- Inappropriate behavior before or after the needle should be handled the same way it would be if it happened at other times.

Provide praise:

- Focus on the parts of the procedure that went well (e.g., “You were very cooperative giving your finger today!” or “You held very still”).
- You can show your approval verbally, through a high-five, or by giving your child a hug or pat on the back

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Provide strategies your child can use to reduce pain and anxiety:

- **Counting:**
 - Can be done prior to beginning the procedure or while the procedure is being done.
- **Distraction:**
 - Have your child focus on something other than the procedure. For example, talk about a television show that's on, ask about how school was today, or sing a favorite song together.
- **Deep breathing:**
 - Encourage your child to take a deep breath and slowly let it out. Have your child blow bubbles or a pinwheel during the procedure

Adopted from: Pediatric Health Psychology Service, IWK Health Centre