

Tips for immunising children

for Parents and Caregivers...

For some children (and parents) needles can be scary and immunisations are expected to hurt. Children can easily tell when their parents are anxious and, as a parent, you need to be aware that your child will look to you for comfort and reassurance.

During the Immunisation

Parents can help decrease anxiety about immunisations in a number of ways.

- Start immunising from an early age.
- Remain calm and relaxed, even when your child becomes upset.
- Breast feeding reduces the baby's pain.
- Bring along a stuffed toy or blanket for your child to hold during the immunisation, or use them yourself as a tool for distraction.
- Hold your child firmly during the procedure, talking calmly and gently stroking the child's arm or back.
- After being pricked by the needle, your child may cry for a brief time. It is his or her way of coping. Your job is to comfort, hold, and talk supportively.
- You will need to remain in the clinic for 20 minutes after the immunisation. Rather than leave immediately, stay in the practice until your child has calmed down. This will help your child to remember the clinic as a nice place and will help to make the next visit easier.
- For babies, book your appointment to allow you to feed your child immediately after they have had their immunisation.

After the Immunisation

Most children experience little or no ill effects after immunisations. Some of the minor effects reported are mild fever, tenderness or swelling and redness at the site of the injection. Take care not to rub the injection site, as this can make the redness worse.

Here are some suggestions of ways to make your baby or child more comfortable:

Cold compress: An ice pack wrapped well in a dry cloth or better still a cool cloth, can be held over the injection site.

Temperature: If your child gets hot, then taking off most of their clothing will help. How much you remove depends on external temperatures such as weather.

Paracetamol: If your child is unsettled or has a fever consider giving them Paracetamol. Paracetamol acts as a pain killer that also helps to bring down temperatures. A child's dose is 15mg/kg. Give according to the instructions on the pack. A baby should not have more than 4 doses of paracetamol in 24 hours.

TLC: Give your child lots of cuddles and lots of fluids. If breastfeeding, give lots of feeds.

Tips for older children

If your child is older (e.g. 3 or 4), they can get bored easily waiting to see the doctor or nurse, so take some favorite books or toys along. You can really help take the anxiety out of the visit by using distraction techniques such as talking to your child and getting them to play imaginary games while the immunisation is happening. Get them to blow out as though blowing bubbles; play a favorite wordgame or something you know your child will be engaged by.