



### How do adolescents react to hospitalizations or doctor's appointments?

- *Hospitalization* (staying in the hospital) can be hard for adolescents because it threatens their growing sense of independence. It can help to let your child be part of making decisions about their care.
- Your child may have a hard time with hospitalization because it separates them from their friends. It might make them feel different from their peers. Encouraging your child to have connections like visits, emails, cards, and/or web-chats with their friends may be helpful.
- A treatment that may lead to a change in an adolescent's physical appearance can affect their self-esteem and sense of self-identity.
- Children at this age often have a sense of **invincibility** (feeling that they cannot be hurt or die). This can affect their willingness to go along with treatments, including procedures using needles. They may refuse it altogether or resist it because they believe that nothing can harm them.

### How can I help my child deal with needle pain?

- Rub the skin the site for about 10 seconds before the needle is given.
- Respect their privacy.
- Be honest and explain medical procedures simply and slowly.
- Support them in talking about what they need.
- Offer your hand or an object to squeeze.
- Dim lights.
- Take deep breaths.
- Listen to music.
- Use humor and tell jokes.
- Have them chew gum (if appropriate).
- Have them read a book or watch TV.
- Ask about virtual reality goggles that are available to use in some areas of the hospital.
- Talk about a favorite place or a happy memory.
- Give praise and encouragement.
- Use guided imagery.

- Suggest relaxation exercises:
  - ❖ Count **down** slowly and quietly from 10 down to 0, saying a number on each *breath out*. (Breathe in, and on your first *breath out* say "10." With the next *breath out*, say "9" and work down to "0".) Do this several times.
  - ❖ Count slowly **up** to "4" as you breathe in. As you breathe out count slowly **down** to "1." (As you breathe in, quietly say to yourself "1...2...3...4..."; then as you breathe out say "4...3...2...1..") Do this several times.
  - ❖ Have your child picture a square in their mind. On their *breath in*, picture a **vertical** (up and down) line and then a **horizontal** (flat) line. On their *breath out*, picture another vertical line and horizontal line to complete the square.

### Are there medications that can help with needle pain?

Yes, you can use a cream called LMX-4 to numb the skin for certain needle procedures. **You need to plan ahead when using the numbing cream, as you have to put it on a special way.** Read our Family Education Sheet to learn more:

<https://extapps.childrenshospital.org/EFPEC/Home/Sheet/1761> or scan the QR code to the right with your phone camera.



Scan this QR code with your phone camera

Many adolescents may refuse the numbing cream and use other ways to cope or tolerate the discomfort. Encourage your adolescent to try the numbing cream at least once, so they know if it helps.

#### There are 3 ways you can get this numbing cream:

- **Talk to your care team about applying LMX-4.** Nurses may apply LMX-4 numbing cream during your clinic visit, before you go to the lab, or before a needle procedure in the clinic. Please keep in mind that you will be billed for the application of this cream.
- **Purchase LMX-4 at your local pharmacy.** You may want to call your pharmacy ahead of time to make sure they have it in stock.
- **Purchase LMX-4 from a reputable online retailer,** such as from Walgreens.com, Walmart.com, or CVS.com.

*This Family Education Sheet is available in Arabic and Spanish.*