

Family Education Sheet

Supporting Your Preschooler During Needle Pain



Boston Children's Hospital
Until every child is well™

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Things you can do during the procedure

- Give your child choices whenever you can. For example: "Do you want to sit on my lap or by yourself?"
- Set limits and give structure.
- Have your child focus on a toy that will keep your child's attention.
- Tell or read your child a story.
- Let your child watch TV or a favorite video.
- Let your child cuddle with a favorite object, blanket, or stuffed animal.
- Rub the skin the site for 10 seconds before the needle is given.

Things you can say during the procedure

- Be funny and/or tell jokes.
- Sing songs, tell nursery rhymes, or play music.
- Try "blowing away the pain" by blowing at a feather or blowing out imaginary birthday candles.
- Tell your child again that the treatment is not a punishment.
- Praise your child. For example: "You are doing a great job holding still."

How do preschoolers react to medical procedures?

- Your preschooler's active imagination may lead them to believe that their procedure or hospitalization is a punishment for something they did.
- To keep this from happening, you can talk with your child about **why** they are having a procedure or going to the hospital.
- Preschoolers need to hear from you that they are safe and that you will protect them.
- Be sure to listen to your child's thoughts and worries and answer any questions they may have.

How can I help my child understand what will happen?

- Give them simple, honest information about what they can expect.
- Simple language is best, like: "This medicine will help keep you healthy."
- Your child might ask what things will feel like. Honest answers are best. For example: "Some kids say a blood test feels like a pinch or a bug bite." It is better to say something like that than to say, "It won't hurt."
- It is helpful to ask your child what they think is happening. That will help you explain anything they have misunderstood.
- Try explaining procedures through medical play. This means that your child sees and touches toy versions of medical materials. This can help them be less afraid. Think about using dolls or a toy medical kit. You can also use actual medical materials if they are safe.

Are there any medications to help with 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

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](#).