

# Family Education Sheet

## Supporting Your Toddler During Needle Pain



**Boston Children's Hospital**  
Until every child is well™

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[www.bostonchildrens.org/familyeducation](http://www.bostonchildrens.org/familyeducation)

### Things you can do during the procedure

- Sit your child on your lap
- Play music
- Dim the lights
- Play with a favorite toy
- Tell or read a story
- Watch TV or a favorite video
- Blow bubbles
- Look at balloons
- Let your child cuddle with a toy, blanket or stuffed animal
- Look at pop-up books together
- Rub the skin at the site for about 10 seconds before the needle is given

### Things you can say during the procedure

- Praise your child. Say things like, "You are doing a great job holding still" or "I'm proud of you for being brave."

## How do toddlers react to medical procedures?

Hospitalization and clinic visits can be hard for toddlers. Their normal routine is different, and the hospital may be a new, unfamiliar environment.

Toddlers are working hard to become independent and move around on their own. Anything that keeps them from moving might upset them. The hardest part of a medical procedure for your child could be staying still.

Your child may show their frustration by:

- Crying
- Screaming
- Running away from adults
- Clinging to familiar adults

## How can I help my child understand what will happen?

You can use "medical play" to explain the procedures your child will have. Your child can see and touch the materials that will be used to get familiar with them and grow less scared of them. This kind of medical play often uses:

- Dolls
- A play medical kit
- Actual medical materials, if safe

Your child may not understand why they need to see a doctor or have a procedure.

Give your child clear and honest information about what they can expect. Use words and phrases that they can understand.

## Are there medications that can help?

- Yes. For infants, we have specially formulated sugar water. Talk to your nurse to learn more.
- Other choices include creams, like LMX-4, to numb the skin. **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.
- **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.



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*This Family Education Sheet is available in Arabic and [Spanish](#).*