

Family Education Sheet

Preparing Your Child for a Vaccination



Boston Children's Hospital

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www.bostonchildrens.org/familyeducation

This family education sheet gives suggestions to help you get your child ready for a vaccination to help it go as smoothly as possible.

Key points

- Bring rewards and treats that can help your child cooperate.
- You can bring things from home to comfort and distract your child. Talking during the vaccine can help.
- Child Life specialists can help you plan for the procedure and may be able to attend the appointment.

What challenges do children have with vaccinations?

Most vaccinations are given as injections (shots), so children of all ages and developmental levels can have a hard time with them.

Your child may also have challenges with being in the waiting room, having a tourniquet or having alcohol swabs and Band-Aids put on their skin.

When should I tell my child about the vaccination?



The way you tell your child about their vaccination depends on your child's developmental needs, anxiety level and what you think is best for them.

- You can **start talking about the vaccination a few days before the appointment** if preparation helps your child.
- You can **wait to tell your child until you're in the hospital or waiting room** if knowing about the vaccination ahead of time will make your child more anxious.

Are there resources to prepare my child?

- You can find My Hospital Story downloads about many different areas and procedures in Boston Children's Hospital. Visit myhospitalstory.org.
- You can ask your Child Life specialist for "first/then" boards, a checklist of steps, visual aids and other resources.



What can I do to during the vaccination to help my child?

You can help your child feel like they have some control over the situation by giving them choices.

- Try saying, "You can sit on your own or sit here with me."
- Try asking, "Which arm do you want to use?" "Would you like me to give you a countdown?"
- Say positive things and compliment your child during the vaccination. You can say, "You're doing really well," or "I like the way you're holding nice and still."
- Try using comfort positions. Sitting your child on your lap and hugging them can be comforting, less scary and a way to help them stay still. For more information about this, please ask a nurse for the family education sheet about comfort positions.
- Practicing deep breathing can help your child stay calm and focused.
- Distractions can help children deal with pain. Even just talking about something general like the weather or cars going by can be helpful.
- Bring comforting items and/or helpful distraction toys to meet your child's needs (like a special stuffed animal, fidget toy or a tablet with a favorite app or video).
- Bring rewards and treats that can help your child cooperate. Something new and exciting can help them feel better about the vaccination.

How can Boston Children's help my child?

- Our goal is to make sure that your child is safe and feels comfortable. Call our Child Life team if you want support before and/or during the appointment: 617-355-6551.
- If a Child Life specialist isn't available to attend your appointment, tell the person at the front desk when you check in that your child may have challenges. This will allow us to help your child as much as possible.
- Talk with the staff about your child's needs. Does it help your child to have a short waiting time? Is it better for only 1 person to speak at a time? Let the staff know what they can do to be ready for your child and able to accommodate your child's needs.



What is a behavior support plan?

A behavior support plan lets our staff know about your child's needs and preferences going forward. This will help caregivers work with your child in future medical appointments and procedures.



Please talk with your child's doctor or Child Life specialist if a behavior support plan would help your child.