

I'm not a robot



children dread the poke of a shot or the doctor's office experience altogether which can make well-child visits stressful on you too. And while it's hard to see your little one frightened, getting your baby vaccinated is one of the most important things you can do to ensure his health and well-being. Vaccines protect your child from diseases like measles, polio, and whooping cough that can make young kids extremely sick. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Reasons to Follow CDC's Recommended Immunization Schedule See All Sources [1] tell parents all the time that we don't give vaccines for diseases that don't kill," says Gina Posner, M.D., a board-certified pediatrician at MemorialCare Medical Group in Fountain Valley, California, and a member of the What to Expect Medical Review Board. "The risk from a vaccine reaction is almost nothing compared to the risk from the disease. The more people who choose not to get their child vaccinated, the higher the risk of getting the disease is. That's why it's essential to stay on top of your child's immunizations (the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has a printable vaccination schedule that should help). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Child and Adolescent Immunization Schedule by Age See All Sources [2] Still, the experience can sometimes be challenging for parents of babies and toddlers. Once your child reaches a certain age, he's likely smartened up to the fact that doctor checkups might include a vaccine. And this realization may make way for a fear of shots and possibly some pre-checkup anxiety not to mention in-office kicking and screaming. To help ease your child's feared make shots hurt less, try these strategies. How parents can prepare for and write down any questions you may have. If you're taking your baby or toddler to a new doctor's office, make sure to bring his immunization records with you. This data is also necessary for enrolling your little one in day care, preschool, or summer camp, and for international travel. Your best bet is to keep the history in a digital file, but your child's pediatrician or your state health department will also have a record. Another must-bring on shot day: a favorite toy, stuffed animal, or blanket. Bottle-feeding or nursing your baby can also help calm fussy little ones, so consider packing a bottle with enough breast milk or formula, or any nursing supplies you might need. At the doctor's office, don't be shy about voicing any questions you might have. A few that might be helpful to ask: What symptoms might I expect my child to experience in the hours and days after the vaccine? What are the signs of a serious reaction? What pain meds, if any, can I give to help relieve discomfort? The Vaccine Information Statement (VIS) on the CDC's Web site is also a great resource about vaccines and possible side effects. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Current VIS See All Sources [3] Keep in mind, though, that most children experience only very mild side effects after getting vaccinated, such as a mild fever or pain around the injection site, and serious reactions are rare. "I was so anxious about this, but my baby did absolutely fine," says What to Expect Community user Letee. "Cried for a couple minutes after the second injection, otherwise was totally normal." The risk from a vaccine reaction is almost nothing compared to the risk from the disease. Dr. Gina Posner, a pediatrician in California and member of the What to Expect Medical Review Board, how parents can make shots easier for babies When its time for your baby's shots, try these strategies to help make shots hurt less and ease any anxiety your baby might be experiencing. 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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Before, During, and After Shots See All Sources [5] That said, some doctor's offices actually recommend that the child lie down since some parents struggle to hold their babies well. Dr. Posner notes, so ask your pediatrician what they suggest. Bring distractions. Use his stuffed animal, a toy, or a book to distract him. Calm him down. Offer a bottle or, if you're breastfeeding, nurse during the vaccination or right afterward to help calm him down. "My daughter cried during the shots and I gave her a bottle right after, which calmed her," says What to Expect Community parent Skylar5385. Skin-to-skin contact, sucking, and the taste of your milk are all naturally soothing for a baby. A pacifier can help too. How parents can make shots easier for toddlers Toddlers are more aware of what's going on (plus, they may remember previous shots), so your distraction tactics may change a little. Here's how to approach the appointment with a toddler or preschooler: Tell the truth. If you have an older toddler or preschooler, be honest with him explain what a shot is and what he can expect when he's at the doctor's office. "Tell them that it hurts for a second and then it's done," says Dr. Posner. Tap him on the arm to show just how quick a second is. If he has an older sibling, enlist his support by having him talk about how he got shots too, and it wasn't so bad. Explain that shots are an important part of children's health and they will make sure that your child doesn't get sick. Time your talk for the day before or morning of your visit so your little one doesn't have a chance to let anxiety build over several days. Consider timing. Although it's not always possible to plan your child's day, try to schedule the appointment at a time when you know he will be well-rested and fed (ie, not during naptime). Bring distractions. 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Don't withhold the treat if your toddler wasn't cooperative having had the shot should entitle him to the treat, no best-behavior-strings attached. Want to know how other parents help ease the pain and fear of vaccines for their little ones? Connect with them on the What to Expect app. How to minimize your child's discomfort after a shot Most kids experience only mild reactions (if any) to vaccines, such as pain at the injection site, a rash, or a fever. These are perfectly normal and should go away within a few days. You can help relieve any discomfort he might be feeling by putting a cool, wet towel on the injection site, drawing a lukewarm or tepid bath to reduce a fever, and giving your child an age-appropriate, non-aspirin pain reliever (as long as your doctor approves). Make sure he stays well-hydrated and call the pediatrician with any concerns. One last tip: A bowl of ice cream usually helps a lot! Just remember that children take their emotional cues from their parents and the youngest babies will be able to sense your fear and anxiety. If you're a nervous wreck every time the needle appears, your child is likely to react in the same way you do. If you're a model of mellow, your child is likely to be calmer too. So deep breaths! Remind yourself that the quick poke of a shot is far preferable to actually catching one of the diseases vaccines prevent. Plus, it's over quickly and then you can rest assured that your child has gotten protection from a serious disease. Some children find shots scary or stressful, but you can help ease any anxiety your little one might be feeling with a few simple strategies. To start, prepare for your appointment by bringing your child's immunization records and packing some small distractions, like a favorite stuffed animal, book, or toy. When it's time for his shots, do your best to stay calm. Kids can sense their parents' fear and anxiety, so if you're mellow, that will help him feel the same. Hold your baby or toddler closely, and bring out any distractions you packed. Breast- or bottle-feeding your little one can also help calm him down afterwards. Once it's over, praise your child for doing a great job. Many parents find that offering a post-shot treat, like a trip to the playground or ice cream shop, can be especially helpful for older toddlers and preschoolers. Most importantly, remember that the quick poke of a shot is far preferable to actually catching one of the diseases that vaccines prevent. These shots protect your little one from catching an illness such as measles, whooping cough, or polio that can make young children very sick or even lead to death.

Make Special Vaccines Less Stressful: Tips to Comfort Babies and Toddlers Before, During, and After Vaccinations Child Life, Education and Creative Arts Therapy This child-friendly learning resource can help prepare your child for getting a vaccine. Learn about what a vaccine is and what it can be like before, during and after. Interactive vaccine information statement (VIS) for parents of children ages 0-6 years old. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Child and Adolescent Immunization Schedule by Age See All Sources [2] Still, the experience can sometimes be challenging for parents of babies and toddlers. Once your child reaches a certain age, he's likely smartened up to the fact that doctor checkups might include a vaccine. And this realization may make way for a fear of shots and possibly some pre-checkup anxiety not to mention in-office kicking and screaming. To help ease your child's feared make shots hurt less, try these strategies. 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How to prepare toddler for injections. Toddler shots. How to prepare child for shots.