

## HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD WITH SHOTS?



- **CALM STARTS WITH THE ADULT.** If you are tense or worried your child will be too. Use your own relaxation strategies to ensure you go into the visit feeling calm and relaxed.
- **TELL THE TRUTH (but not too soon!).** If you know your child will be getting a shot or shots, tell them if/when they ask. If your child worries about shots, it is best not to tell them too long before their appointment (the day of the shot is usually ideal). Often times telling too early can make worry bigger. If you know you will struggle to get your child into the office if you talk about shots, allow the provider to break the news. (Whether they ask or not, if you know your child will not be getting a shot, it's ok to let them know as early as you know.).
- **BE HONEST.** Saying something like "Yes, it'll hurt but just for a few seconds." is most helpful. This builds trust.
- **BE CLEAR ABOUT CHOICES.** Your child can certainly have some choice about shots - which arm, whether they sit alone or on your lap, whether a sibling is in the room and whether they watch or not are all appropriate choices to offer your child some control over the situation. However, whether or not your child will be getting a shot is an adult decision. Avoid prolonged negotiations if you have decided with your provider that your child is going to get a shot - this will help avoid escalating anxiety.
- **IDENTIFY SOMETHING TO LOOK FORWARD TO.** Think about something fun or enjoyable your child gets to do after the visit. This can be something special you planned to help your child or it can simply be something that is already a part of your child's day that he/she looks forward to. No need for anything big! It will be helpful to focus on this instead of the shot(s).
- **COMMUNICATE NEEDS RIGHT AWAY.** If you struggle with shots yourself, feel siblings would best be together or apart for shots, believe your child may need to be restrained for a shot, need someone

to help with another child that is not getting a shot, or otherwise need assistance, **ask!** We are happy to help. We do this every day! With this said, please allow the nurse to manage the situation!

- **DISTRACT YOUR CHILD.**
  - Squeeze his/her hand
  - Tell a story
  - Blow bubbles/pinwheel
  - Sing
  - Play I Spy
- **MOVE ON!** After the shot, focus on how wonderfully your child did (even if there was screaming and tears!). Remind your child of what happens after the visit (a sticker, a fun activity, a treat). If your child talks about how scary or painful the shot was, acknowledge their experience, but redirect the focus to the fact that it is over and they were successful. **STAY POSITIVE!**

Developed by Rebecca Ruid, Ph.D.

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