

Your Child's Anxiety and Immunizations



An immunization shot does not need to be stressful for children. With a little preparation, parents can help alleviate a child's anxiety when receiving immunizations.

Prepare Ahead! Reinforce ahead of time that the health care provider's office is a nice place. Also, you can bring along a stuffed toy or blanket for your child to hold on to during the immunization. Finally, plan on holding your child during the procedure. It is often more frightening for a child to receive their shots if you leave the room.

Inform the Child Ahead of Time. The day of the immunizations, tell children under the age of 7 about the immunization appointment about one hour beforehand. A longer "countdown" may cause extra anxiety.

Use Distraction in the Waiting Room. You can help your child focus on something else by singing, using humor, listening to music, watching TV, reading, or blowing bubbles.

When the Time Arrives. Get down to the child's eye level and be honest in telling them that the shot will hurt a little, but the pain won't last long. It is important that you, as the parent, remain calm and in control while in the exam room. Let the child watch the needle piercing the skin if they want to. However, you can also act as the focal point if the child decides to look away.

After the Shots. Reward your child afterward! Praise them and go somewhere special after to celebrate such as getting an ice cream cone.