

TIPS FOR VACCINATING CHILDREN

Needles can sometimes be scary for children (and adults). Before coming to your COVID-19 vaccination appointment, it is important to have conversations with your child about the COVID-19 vaccine. Having open discussions will help ease your child's uncertainties and help provide a safe experience for your family.



Here are some helpful ways to help reduce pain for your child when they get their vaccine.

Prepare your child ahead of time

- Read stories about what happens when you visit a health care provider and when your child gets a vaccination
- Offer an honest explanation about what to expect; prepare older children the day before
- Describe how vaccination will feel (e.g., like a pinch)
- Tell your child what they can do to (e.g., sit still, breathe deeply, relax the arm)
- Use age-appropriate language to answer your children's questions directly and honestly
 - It is okay if you do not have all the answers; simple statements of facts are usually the most helpful for children
- Children tend to mirror what their parents are feeling; by modeling healthy coping skills, your children will be able to calm their nerves

To prepare for your appointment, videos of what to expect at the clinic are available at york.ca/COVID19VaccineBeforeYouGo.

AT THE VACCINE CLINIC

Every effort is being made to reduce anxiety and vaccine-related fears for children, including:

- Children can have a parent or support person with them
- Longer appointment times
- Welcoming children to bring in item to provide comfort and/or a distraction, such as stuffed animals, a phone with games or movies

ADDITIONAL TIPS

For added comfort, parents and caregivers may also choose to use numbing cream or patches prior to attending the clinic. These are available over the counter at most pharmacies and the pharmacist can explain how to use them prior to vaccination.

Distract your child

- Draw your child's attention away from the needle - this is one of the best ways that you can help your child
- Distract your child with a favourite toy or blanket, a book, music, singing, or telling a joke or a story
- Tell your child to take a deep breath and to blow it out slowly

Position your child in an upright position

As a parent/caregiver, it is important to be calm and supportive.

Hold your young child securely in a comforting hug, sitting upright on your lap, facing forward or facing you (front to front), with the arm exposed. Lying flat on their back during an injection, or being held too tightly, can be scary for children and can increase their fear. Older children can sit alone if they wish, with the arm exposed.

Learn the CARD System – Comfort, Ask, Relax and Distract

If children have fears of needles, there are many coping mechanisms for them. All clinic staff are trained to employ the CARD system: **C**omfort, **A**sk, **R**elax, and **D**istract. You can learn more about the [CARD system from Immunize Canada](#).



COVID-19 VACCINATION RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

- Visit york.ca/COVID19VaccineInfo for vaccine resources and current information
- Speak to a York Region Public Health Nurse by calling Health Connection at 1-800-361-5653
- SickKids Hospital has a [COVID-19 Vaccine Consult Service](#) to answer vaccination related questions for you and your family
- Visit [Max the Vax](#) for child friendly COVID-19 resources and information for parents
- Speak with your family health care provider, they are a valuable source of information