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Babies and shots

Immunizations (vaccinations) are important to keep your child healthy. This article discusses how to ease the pain of shots for babies.

Information

Parents often wonder how to make shots less painful for their babies. Nearly all immunizations (also called vaccinations) need to be given into the muscle or under the skin using a needle and syringe. Reducing your child's anxiety level may be the best way to help limit the pain.

Here are some tips.

BEFORE THE SHOT

Tell older children that the shot is needed to keep them safe and healthy. Knowing what to expect ahead of time may reassure the child.

Explain to the child that it is OK to cry. But suggest that the child try to be brave. Explain that you do not like shots either, but you try to be brave, too. Praise the child after the shot is over, whether or not they cry.

Plan something fun to do afterward. A trip to the park or other entertainment after the shot can make the next one less scary.

Some health care providers use a pain-relieving spray or cream before giving the shot.

WHEN THE SHOT IS BEING GIVEN

Put pressure on the area before the shot is given.

Stay calm and do not let the child see if you are upset or anxious. The child will notice if you cringe before the shot. Talk calmly and use soothing words.

Follow the provider's instructions about how to hold your child to steady the leg or arm that will get the shot.

Distract the child by blowing bubbles or playing with a toy. Or point out a picture on the wall, count or say the ABCs, or tell the child something funny.

WHAT TO EXPECT AT HOME

After the shot is given, a cool, damp cloth may be placed on the vaccination site to help reduce soreness.

Frequently moving or using the arm or leg that received the shot may also help reduce the soreness.

Giving your child acetaminophen or ibuprofen may help relieve common, minor symptoms after immunizations. Follow package instructions about how to give your child the medicine. Or contact your child's provider for instructions.

Side effects from the shots vary, depending on which type of immunization was given. Most of the time, side effects are mild. Contact your child's provider right away if your child:

- Develops a high fever
- Cannot be calmed
- Becomes much less active than normal

COMMON VACCINES FOR CHILDREN

- Chickenpox vaccine
- DTaP immunization (vaccine)
- Hepatitis A vaccine
- Hepatitis B vaccine
- Hib vaccine
- HPV (human papillomavirus) vaccine
- Influenza vaccine
- Meningococcal vaccine
- MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccine
- Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine
- Pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine
- Polio immunization (vaccine)
- Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) monoclonal antibodies
- Rotavirus vaccine
- Tdap vaccine

Alternative Names

Babies and vaccines; Babies and immunizations; Babies and vaccinations; Chickenpox - shots; DTaP - shots; Hepatitis A - shots; Hepatitis B - shots; Hib - shots; Haemophilus influenza - shots; Influenza - shots; Meningococcal - shots; MMR - shots; Pneumococcal - shots; Polio - shots; IPV - shots; Tdap - shots

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Review Date 2/17/2024

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