

VACCINE SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN

Shandra Taylor, MS, CCLS

Certified Child Life Specialist

MarinHealth Medical Center



What is a Child Life Specialist?

- Educated and clinically trained to aid in decreasing a child's experience of stress.
- Work in partnership with families and the healthcare team to meet the psychosocial, emotional, and developmental needs of children, adolescents, and young adults.
- Help children, and their families cope with the stress and uncertainty of illness, injury, trauma, disability, loss and bereavement.
- Provide therapeutic play, preparation for procedures, and education to reduce fear, anxiety, and pain.



**"For children play is serious learning.
Play really is the work of childhood."**

-Fred Rogers



Infant Development 0-1

- Experience the world through senses and movement
- Separation and stranger anxiety
- Begin to understand cause and effect
- Development of object permanence
- Learning to trust caregivers

Helpful Tips During Vaccinations

- Parental involvement
- Decrease parental anxiety
- Breast feeding
- Holding
- Patting
- Speaking in soft voice
- Music/singing
- Teething toys/rings
- Rattles
- Light-up toys
- Sweet-Ease

Toddler Development 1-3

- Symbolic thought emerges
- Still thinking concretely about the world around them
- Language development
- Pretend play
- Gaining sense of independence and personal control

Helpful Tips During Vaccinations

- Provide choices when possible
- Encourage normalization through play
- Speaking in calm voice
- Music/singing
- Nursery rhymes
- Holding
- Pop-up/sound books
- Look-and-find books
- Light-up toys
- Bubbles

Preschool Development 3-5

- Imaginative/magical thinking
- Fear of the unknown
- Egocentrism- inability to view the world from another person's perspective
- May believe that they did something to cause an injury, illness or medical procedure
 - Some children think that they are getting an immunization because they were “bad.” Please assure your child that immunizations are not a punishment.
- Exploration and initiative

Helpful Tips During Vaccinations

- Increase opportunities for control
- Provide choices when possible
- Age appropriate explanations
- Speaking in calm voice
- Music/singing
- Pop-up/sound books
- Look-and-find books
- Bubbles
- Counting
- Talking about favorite things

School-Age Development 6-12

- Can begin to understand logic and reasoning
- Importance of school and social interaction
- Become less egocentric and begin to think about the perspective of others
- Understanding of conservation and reversibility
- Gaining sense of competency and confidence

Helpful Tips During Vaccinations

- Provide full explanation and preparation
- Allow for questions and active participation
- Provide opportunities for self-expression
- Offer coping techniques
- Speaking in calm voice
- Music
- Talking about favorite things
- Squeezing a ball
- Taking slow, deep breaths
- Electronics (phone, handheld device)
- I-Spy books

Adolescent Development 12-18

- Abstract thinking and hypothetical reasoning
- Egocentrism returns
- Invincibility and invulnerability
- Developing identity and sense of self
- Seek to be accepted by others
- Begin to think more about moral, philosophical, ethical, social, and political issues

Helpful Tips During Vaccinations

- Allow for privacy
- Provide opportunities for choice
- Opportunities for self-expression
- Honest explanations
- Electronic devices (phone, handheld device)
- Taking slow, deep breaths
- Squeezing a ball
- Talking about a favorite place, activity or thing
- Music

Pain Management

There are many pain management options that aid in decreasing pain associated with vaccinations. Talk to your provider about what options are available.

- Numbing Cream
- Buzzy Bee
- Sweet-Ease (under 6 months)
- Freezy Spray
- Shot Blockers



Providing Age Appropriate Preparation

- Previous healthcare experiences can inform coping.
- Typically, the older your child is, the farther in advance they should be prepared.
- Help them with creating a coping plan.
- It's a typical reaction for children to cry or become upset upon hearing this information.
 - Validate their feelings and focus on what they have a choice in.
- Use their strengths- some are visual learners and may benefit from looking at pictures.
- Ask what would help them hold still and have them bring that to the visit. Some children like to bring a special toy or blanket, electronic devices or anything that typically helps to calm them. This may help them feel more in control.
- Some children respond well to incentives such as stickers, treats, or a special activity with their caregiver.

Coping Strategies to Help Your Child

- Be honest
- Comfort positioning
- Comfort item (blanket, stuffed animal)
- Decrease parental anxiety
- Diversion/alternative focus
 - Watching videos or playing games on iPad/phone
 - Bubbles
 - Singing
 - iSpy games
- Allow for choices when appropriate
 - Which arm for vaccine
 - Counting before poke
 - Choosing a Band-Aid
- Focus on the recovery. Having something fun to look forward to afterwards!



Comfort Positioning

Comfort positions are secure hugging holds that help your child feel safe and secure during medical procedures



Infant swaddle



Older infant back-to-chest



Toddler chest-to-chest



Toddler chest-to-chest



Preschooler Back-to-chest



Preschooler side-sitting

Developmental Differences Support

- Parents/Caregivers know their child best. You are their best advocate!
- Using their strengths to tailor preparation for their specific needs.
- Advocate for alternatives/accommodations.
- Share your child's coping plan and strengths with provider.
- Using story boards to provide preparation, illustrated picture cards, videos, etc.
- Autism Speaks: www.autismspeaks.org

THANK YOU!

Contact Information:

Shandra Taylor, MS, CCLS

shandra.taylor@mymarinhealth.org

References

- The Association of Child Life Professionals. (2022). The Case for Child Life. The Association of Child Life Professionals. Retrieved April 19, 2022, from <https://www.childlife.org/the-child-life-profession/the-case-for-child-life>
- The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. (2017, July 10). Vaccine support. Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. Retrieved April 19, 2022, from <https://www.chop.edu/centers-programs/child-life-education-and-creative-arts-therapy/prepare-your-child-visit-doctor/vaccine-support>
- Thompson, R. H. (2018). Handbook of Child Life: A Guide for Pediatric Psychosocial Care. Charles C Thomas.

Tips to Support Your Child

During Vaccinations

Before:

- If possible, try scheduling the appointment for a time that is best for your child.
- Call the clinic ahead of time if there is any information the staff should know to support your child's experience.
- Ask your provider what pain management options are available.
- Prepare your child for what to expect during their appointment.
- Help your child create a coping plan.

During:

- Decrease your personal anxiety. If you are relaxed and calm, it will help your child feel the same way.
- If your child is highly anxious, ask the provider if they can administer the vaccine at the beginning of the visit.
- Get into a comfortable position with your child.
- Offer choices when appropriate. This will increase their sense of control over the situation.
- Incorporate distraction.

After:

- Praise your child for specific behaviors, such as holding still, taking deep breaths or being brave.
- Provide empathy, but focus more on positives and/or what can be done next time to make it better.
- Avoid apologizing for giving the vaccine, but instead let them know how proud you are of them and reinforce the reason for the vaccine — to keep them healthy.
- Celebrate their accomplishment!

Communicate with your child

Education = Cooperation

- Educate and Empower - Help your child understand the vaccination is to help their body be healthy.
- Be honest with your child
 - instead of saying 'this won't hurt,' try 'there is going to be a small pinch but it will be less than the count of ____'
- Give realistic choices:
 - Do you want us to give your vaccination in your left or right arm? Do you want to watch or look away? Do you want to hold or squeeze my hand?

Provide your child with goals or "jobs"

What's your job?

- "Your job is to keep your arm still. It is okay to say 'ouch' or even cry but your job is to hold your arm still"
- "Your job is to take big breaths in and blow big breaths out" (practice doing breaths beforehand)
- Praise them on how well they did with their jobs! Even if they needed help you can comment on how hard you saw they tried: "I am proud of how hard you tried to keep your arm still"

Position your child for their comfort

Sit up and be connected

- Allow your child to sit on your lap.
 - Give a warm hug either *back-to-chest* or *chest-to-chest*.
- Allow your child to sit next to you and hold hands



Practice deep breathing

Breathe in...Breathe out

- Have your child practice taking deep breaths with you prior to the vaccination
- Use visuals, pretend to smell flowers or blow out birthday candles.
- Have your child "blow away" any pain they feel by doing bigger breaths when it is time for the vaccination.

Use distraction and comfort items

Distraction for all ages

- **Infants:** comfort hold, pacifiers, blanket or stuffed animal.
- **Toddlers:** comfort hold, breathing exercises, singing, stories and light up toys.
- **Preschool age:** comfort hold, breathing exercises, singing, stories and light up toys.
- **School Age:** breathing exercises, games, iPad, music, conversation, stress balls
- **Adolescents:** breathing exercises, games, iPad, music, conversation, stress balls

Visit <https://www.ucsfbenioffchildrens.org/services/child-life>
to learn more about our services.

Name &
Pronouns

MY VACCINATION PLAN

My learning style(s):

- No information
- Limited information
- Tell me everything
- other: _____

People I want present for my vaccination

My coping preferences

- Left Arm Right Arm
- Guided imagery
- Breathing exercises
- No Information - Just do it!
- My own comfort item
- Count down
- Step by step explanations
- other: _____

Distraction preferences

- iPad
- YouTube Video/ TV
- Stress ball
- Music
- Conversation
- Phone
- other: _____
- other: _____

I also want you to know