

Commitment to Comfort: Orientation

Ease pain and distress before, during and after immunization

Needle Fears

- Up to 25 percent of adults have needle fears.
- About 10 percent of those adults have such significant needle fear that they will avoid immunization and other healthcare procedures.^{1,2,3}
- Healthcare providers play a critical role in implementing strategies that optimize immunization uptake, ease fears and promote comfort.

AHS' Commitment to Comfort

- Commitment to Comfort (CTC) is an evidence-based quality improvement initiative that was developed at the Alberta Children's Hospital in 2014.
- The five CTC principles promote comfort by helping lessen pain and distress during healthcare interactions.^{4,5,6}
- These evidence-informed principles and strategies have been expanded to support adult COVID-19 immunization in Alberta.
- AHS has integrated CTC into the [COVID-19 Immunization Policy](#) to be used in collaboration with clients and families.
- Application of the five CTC principles reduces fear and pain to improve immunization readiness, experience and uptake.

Five CTC Principles

1. Make a Comfort Plan

- Consider what can be done before, during and after immunization.
- Ask the client how they are feeling about getting a needle.
- Offer CTC choices to identify preferred comfort strategies.

2. Use Positive Language

- Language is an impactful intervention to reduce pain and distress.
- See [Positive Language Guide for Immunizers](#)

3. Position Comfortably

- If possible, have the client sit in an upright comfortable position, with their arm relaxed.
- If the client feels faint, or has a history of fainting with needles:
 - Encourage alternating muscle tension and relaxation (for 15 seconds each). If possible, have them sit or lie down.
 - Call for support if needed.

4. Use Distraction

- Shift the client's attention away from the needle by suggesting slow deep breathing, having them think of a favorite place, using their phone or tablet (for a game or music) or engaging in small talk about the weather or another neutral subject.
- See the [Distraction Techniques Guide](#)

5. Use Numbing Cream

- If the client chooses to use numbing cream, it must be obtained and applied by the client prior to their appointment.
- Numbing cream will not be available or offered at AHS immunization sites.
- Before their immunization appointment, clients can talk with a pharmacist to select and obtain a product that is right for them.
- Brand names include: Ametop, Emla and Maxilene
- See [Numbing Cream Guide](#)

References

¹ McLenen J, Rogers MA. The fear of needles: A systematic review and meta-analysis. J Adv Nurs. 2019;75(1):30-42. doi:10.1111/jan.13818

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³ Taddio A, Ipp M, Thivakaran S, et al. Survey of the prevalence of immunization non-compliance due to needle fears in children and adults. Vaccine. 2012;30(32):4807-4812.

⁴ Taddio, A, McMurtry CM, Pillai Riddell R., et al. Reducing pain during vaccine injections. CMAJ. 2015; 187 (13) 975-982. doi: <https://www.cmaj.ca/content/cmaj/187/13/975.full.pdf>

⁵ McMurtry, CM, Taddio, A., Noel, M., Antony, M, et al. Exposure-based interventions for the management of individuals with high levels of needle fear across the lifespan: A clinical practice guideline and call for future research. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. 2016; 45(3) 217-235. doi: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4867871/pdf/sbeh-45-217.pdf>

⁶ World Health Organization Position Paper: Reducing pain at time of vaccine. 2015; doi: https://www.who.int/immunization/newsroom/reducing_pain_vaccination/en/