

Commitment to Comfort

Ease Patient Anxiety Before, During and After Immunizations

Up to 25% of adults have needle fears; ~10% of needle fears are significant enough for people to avoid vaccines and other healthcare procedures^{1,2,3}. This represents over 3,000,000 adults in Canada. Healthcare providers, patients, and caregivers play a critical role in implementing strategies that optimize vaccine uptake, ease fears and promote comfort.

Commitment to Comfort is an evidence-based quality improvement and knowledge translation strategy used to promote comfort and reduce distress with any painful procedure^{4,5,5}. The principles of Commitment to Comfort directly address/reduce fear and pain to improve vaccine readiness, experience and uptake.

Immunizers can follow the FIVE COMMITMENT TO COMFORT PRINCIPLES to promote vaccine uptake and comfort and reduce distress, pain and fear during immunization:

Create a Comfort Plan

Ask if the person being vaccinated has preferences or concerns with their comfort management and offer choice when able (e.g., preferred pain management strategies, comfort positions).

- Use simple, positive language when communicating (*see positive language*).

Use Numbing Cream

- Apply numbing cream to the injection area for the recommended period of time (usually 30-60 minutes prior to the needle).

Use Simple, Positive Language

- Use of simple, positive language can reduce pain and distress during an immunization and make it more likely a person will return for vaccinations in the future.
- Communicate in a way that reduces fear and distress prior, during, and after the immunization. For example:
 - Avoid saying “it will be over soon” or “it will be OK” or words that amplify fear or pain, for example “this is a really painful shot”.
 - Talk about what is going well/went well, for example “you did a great job relaxing your arm”
 - After the immunization is over tell the individual “they did well”, or “by doing this today you are saving lives/keeping yourself and others safe.”

¹ McLenon 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

² McMurtry CM, Pillai Riddell R, Taddio A, et al. Far from “just a poke”: Common painful needle procedures and the development of needle fear. *Clin J Pain*. 2015;31(10S):S3-S11.

doi:10.1097/AJP.0000000000000272

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>

⁵ World Health Organization Position Paper: Reducing pain at time of vaccine. 2015; doi: https://www.who.int/immunization/newsroom/reducing_pain_vaccination/en/

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Use Comfort Positions

When possible, have the person receiving the vaccination sit in an upright comfortable position. If the person receiving the vaccination feels faint or has a history of fainting with needles:

- encourage alternating muscle tension and relaxation (for 15 seconds increments), or
- have the person lie down

Shift Attention

- Support the individual to shift their attention from the immunization to a more pleasant or engaging activity or thought. Examples: using electronics (music/games), slow deep breathing, asking 'small talk' friendly questions, or focusing on a picture or poster on the wall.