

Provider Tip of the Week

November 17, 2021

Supporting Children Through Painful Procedures



A trip to the doctor's office can be scary for children, especially when there are possibilities of vaccines and bloodwork. It can be challenging to know how to support children during these procedures. Below are some tips to help make children feel more comfortable during a wide variety of procedures.

Offer Comfort Positioning

Comfort positions are ways that caregivers can hold their children in a comfortable, safe way that help them feel safe. Physical contact between a caregiver and child during a procedure is extremely beneficial. Examples of ways that caregivers can hold their children include either chest to chest or back to chest on their lap or sitting side by side. This provides an opportunity for parents to hug their children in a comforting way, while also helping keep them still. This can improve safety and help children regulate their emotions and master their healthcare experience.

Use One Voice

Children can feel overwhelmed when there are many different voices telling them what to do during a procedure. Designating one specific person in the room who can narrate what is happening during the procedure can minimize noise and help ensure that the child knows what is happening.

Develop an Alternate Focus Plan

Utilizing age appropriate items and activities to provide an alternate focus gives children the opportunity to turn their attention to something other than the procedure and can help to reduce anxiety. Common strategies include singing a favorite song, looking at a phone, iPad, or book, playing with a fidget toy, and using an I Spy book or playing I Spy around the room. Working with the patient and caregiver to create an individualized distraction plan can give the child a sense of control and lead to a positive experience.

Use Relaxation Techniques

Encouraging children to take slow, deep breaths in and out can help relax their bodies and minds during procedures. Guided imagery, or visualizing images in the mind, can also help reduce stress associated with procedures. For instance, telling a child to imagine their favorite place and then describing the place by the various senses that the child may see, hear, or smell in that place.

Give Realistic Choices

Providing opportunities for appropriate choices can help children feel like they have some control in a situation where they may otherwise feel powerless. Simple, appropriate choices include whether the child watches the procedure or looks away, which arm the Provider looks at first, or where the child sits during the procedure. Giving children realistic choices during procedures helps them understand that their voices are being heard.



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