

Relaxation Exercises:

Belly Breathing

- Get into a comfortable position and place your hand on your belly.
- Breathe in deeply through your nose as you count to four.
- Feel the hand on your belly go up as you breathe in.
- Hold your breath to the count of four.
- Breathe out slowly through your mouth as you count to four.
- Feel the hand on your belly go down as you breathe out.
- Keep taking slow, deep breaths.

Body Relaxation

- Pretend you are a robot... Make all the muscles in your body stiff and tight...tighter...tighter...
- Now pretend you are a rag doll... Let all the muscles in your body relax and go floppy.
- Repeat a few times – robot, then rag doll. Notice how much better it feels to be relaxed.

Getting ready for your child's next medical procedure:

- Focus on a positive aspect of your child's last medical procedure, (e.g., "It was great that you used deep breathing to stay calm in the waiting room!").
- Help your child plan which coping tools he/she will use next time. Circle or highlight the coping tools listed in this brochure, and list them below:

Coping tools I will use for my next medical procedure:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

- Help your child practice the coping tools he/she will use. "Act out" the steps of the medical procedure with your child, including the coping tools. For younger children, use dolls and medical toys to help practice.

Developed by the health care professionals of the Department of Psychology, Child Life and Pathology with assistance from the Department of Learning & Development

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Tips for Caregivers

How to help your child cope during a medical procedure



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What caregivers do affects how children cope during a medical procedure

All AGES

Helpful Caregiver Behaviours:

- Modeling being calm
- Providing distraction and support
- Suggesting ways to cope
- Giving honest answers to your child's questions (e.g., "It may feel like a pinch")
- Bringing a familiar toy or blanket
- Praising your child (e.g. for holding arm still)

Unhelpful Caregiver Behaviours:

- Getting upset
- Apologizing or bargaining
- Criticizing
- Making many reassuring comments (e.g. "It won't hurt at all")
- Talking about previous negative experiences

What you can do to help your child cope:

Babies:

- Sucking (e.g. feeding or pacifier)
- Distraction with objects or toys
- Cuddling
- Music/singing

Toddlers and Preschoolers:

- Sucking (e.g. pacifier)
- Blowing a pinwheel
- Cuddling
- Books
- Telling stories
- Counting
- Music or singing
- Pretend play
- Videos

School-Age Children:

- Relaxation exercises (See next page)
- Blowing a pinwheel
- Choosing to watch the procedure or look away
- Holding or squeezing hand
- Books (e.g. Where's Waldo, I Spy)
- Counting
- Music/singing
- Playing "I Spy"
- Videos or games

Teens:

- Relaxation exercises (See next page)
- Choosing to watch the procedure or look away
- Holding or squeezing a hand
- Books
- Conversation (e.g. talk about a favourite place)
- Music
- Videos or games