

The why & language

Preparation AND honesty for Preschoolers is important

Basic, concrete information

- “Your body needs a shot to keep you healthy and help you grow.”
 - If you are unsure of all the steps, you have a right as a parent to call the doctors’ office and ask - will they check their blood pressure, look with a otoscope in their ears/nose.

Talk about going to the doctor’s as a positive experience

Reassure they need to go to the doctors to check their body, not because of any of their actions

Allow space to ask questions - Validate any feelings/emotions of being scared or worried or nervous

Use language the child is familiar with

- “The doctor is going to listen to your breathing, let’s show them how you can take a deep breaths and blow bubbles.”

Talk about how all kids/adults go to the doctors for check-ups

- Relate to the child - big sister/brother goes to the doctors, moms/dads go to the doctors, friend from school/neighborhood goes to the doctors

Practice

Medical play - practice on a doll

- Model the steps for the child

Create concrete routine and practice on doll

- talk about what is "helpful" for the doll during the poke (deep breath, hug parent, song on iPad)

Give them a job - holding body still, blowing bubbles, squeezing parents hand

Use play or a book/story to initiate conversation in safe setting

Let them know about visit 1 day before

Provide reminder morning of

Verbalize concrete next steps just prior to action

Providing Warning

Let them know they will be getting a shot 2-3 days prior, and remind them the morning of the appointment. Talk about the concrete steps for the day and what they will experience:

- how they will get to the doctors office
- what they can play in the waiting room, what a coping plan is
- reminders of what will happen and cues for "all done"
- what will happen following the event (go home to rest, go pick up sibling from school, go to park)

COPING PLAN

Position for Comfort

Sitting on parents lap, explaining it that parent/caregiver is giving a big hug (if staff is ok with this positioning)

- Chest to chest (hugging) with arm stationary on table to the side
- Back to chest with arm stationary on table to the side

Distraction

Blowing bubbles

Interactive book

iPad game/song/video

Light scratching above injection site to confuse block the message of pain being sent to the brain (or the use of Buzzy Bee)

Routine Preferences

Engage the doctor and the child, modeling trusting relationship

- Give the child something to show the doctor that is special to them
- Have the child show the doctor a new skill they have learned and provide positive praise

Provide opportunity through choice through

- which distraction options
- Look or not look?
- who counts to 3?

Think about conditioning: routine is important because they learn what is coming, feel a sense of trust, and can deescalate quicker

Consistency with routine

- Concrete cues - 1, 2, 3
- Changing position when all done to really show all done

Reminding of job and what the cue is for "all done"

Specific positive reinforcement following the completion of the procedure

- "You did a good job of holding on to mom/dad."

Activity for After Doctor Visit

Sticker Chart - positive reinforcement

Special activity time - have an activity they would be interested in which parent participates in (slime, play doh, pretend play)

Special snack

We really want to avoid punishment or negative reinforcement - we want to always be able to focus on what they are doing well and point that out

Remember

Crying or struggling does NOT mean the child does not have healthy coping - this is a natural response to negative stimuli

Focus on the recovery and positive praise

Talk about the experience after it is over in a positive light - allow for medical play after doctor's visit to help the child process the experience