

The why & language

Very simple, concrete language - the shot is to help your body
Explain what is happening (verbalizing for them), request what you need from them and give them time to make this happen
Reaffirm what they are doing well
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.”

Provide choices when appropriate - which comfort items to bring with them

Practice

Read stories/books about going to the doctor
Introduce the routines of a doctors office into play experiences at home

- can be real items or medical toys

Verbalize for them during the play

- the doll is “taking medicine” or “getting a poke”
- talk about what the doll's “job” is - holding arm very still, taking a big breath out, giving parent a hug

1 day prior to appointment, talk about how you are going to drive/walk to visit the doctor, see the doctor, and then what is the plan for after the doctors’ office (going home, going to the park, eating lunch)

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) most beneficial for this age group, allows for the feeling the parent is blocking between the child and the medical staff member giving the shot
- Back to chest with parent hugging from behind and child engaging in distraction facing forward

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 Preference

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

- option for distraction
- choice to hold comfort item brought from home?

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

Activities for After Doctor Visit

Physical soothing touch - Primary caregiver important

Specific positive reinforcement following the completion of the procedure

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

This is a very distractible age group - Return to play with child

- change activity right after and they quickly forget
- Bring new activity or favorite toy to transition to play
- Favorite snack (in moderation)
- Favorite song on YouTube

Remember

Crying or struggling does NOT mean the child is not 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