

How Can You Comfort Your Baby During Shots

Most moms often ask a question from health professionals "My baby cries uncontrollably when he/she gets a shot. Are there any ways to make this experience less traumatic for him/her?" Well, most of us have been there: the wailing physician's office scene. You are mortified that baby is crying and you are also heartbroken. Here's your poor, little, sensitive kid, and you just gave someone permission to stick him/her with a bunch of painful needles.

Getting your kids vaccinated can be tough on your child as well as on you, but the benefits are worth the effort. Before your baby's second birthday, he or she may be poked with a painful needle up to 20 times during vaccinations. Nonetheless, these shots protect children from fatal diseases. Fortunately, there are few things you can do to make the experience less stressful and painful. According to a new journal published in *Pediatrics*, use the five S's immediately after your child gets a vaccine. These are:

Swaddling - You should swaddle (wrapping a baby tightly in a blanket like a "burrito") your child immediately after the shot. You can also wrap him/her before the shot, but in this case, leave your baby's legs exposed for the vaccination.

Side/stomach position - It involves lying your child on his/her side or stomach (just don't do this when he or she is sleeping or unsupervised — children should sleep in prone position i.e. on their backs to prevent SIDS sudden infant death syndrome).

Shushing - It involves making some other 'shhh' sound or playing white noise to divert the baby's attention.

Swinging - It involves swinging the child in your shower or your good, old fashioned arms.

Sucking - Giving your child the opportunity to suck (whether through breastfeeding, a feeder, or a pacifier).

Studies have shown that doing at least 4 of the 5 S's significantly reduces the duration of time infants cry after getting vaccinated. If you are OK with breastfeeding your child at the physician's office (to fulfill the sucking

recommendation), this step alone can be the most effective method of distracting your baby's attention and calming him/her down.

In certain situations, a sugar water solution may come in handy. Dipping a pacifier into this solution and giving it to a fussy child may help soothe him/her.

Before and after the vaccine is given, try applying gentle pressure around the injection site. This method may prevent the skin area from feeling so painful.

For a toddler or an older baby, shushing and swaddling might not work. Try letting your baby sit on your lap during the shot and distract him/her with a toy or something else. Try not to look upset or anxious. Children are intelligent enough that they can pick up on a parent's anxiety, and this can make them anxious as well.

Slapping your child's skin area forcefully is also one of the excellent methods to reduce discomfort and pain during a shot. The reason behind is that a forceful slap stimulates his or her pain receptors in the body and the threshold for pain is significantly increased. So, when the shot is given, the already increased pain threshold will let your baby feel less pain.

If your child has pain at the injection site, develops a fever or rash, or feels sick, speak to your child's physician about giving medicine such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen (paracetamol) to relieve symptoms.

Also, do not forget to praise your child afterward. Your little positive reinforcement can not only make him/her feel better but also make the next trip to the physician easier. A trip to the playground or park can also make the overall shot experience less stressful.

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Dr. Emma George is medical graduate and nutritionist with over five years of experience in the field of medicine. She has a special interest in medicine, advancing medical techniques, and how the knowledge of medicine helps people improve their lives. Besides that, she is also a passionate writer and has published many health-related articles, books, and journals over the past years.

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