



Three ways to reduce your baby's vaccination pain

By Angela Robertson

As a new parent, taking your baby to the doctor for her first set of vaccinations can be a nerve-racking experience. In fact, some parents consider delaying their baby's vaccinations because of the pain it can cause. This can leave a baby exposed to serious diseases.

Since every parent wants a happy, healthy baby, here are three safe and effective ways you can reduce your baby's vaccination pain.

1. Prepare ahead of time

When making your appointment, ask the doctor what you can expect on the day of your

baby's vaccinations. You may want to ask how many needles she will receive, and what you should bring.

Some items may include: your baby's vaccination record, a pacifier, a cosy blanket and a numbing cream or sugar water to reduce needle pain.

On the day of the appointment, you may also want to consider what your baby wears.

"I recommend parents try and dress their baby in an outfit that is easy to take off and put back on, such as an outfit with few snaps," said Dr. Shirley Blachman, a community-based paediatrician and member of the Canadian Paediatric Society's Public Education Committee.

2. Dull needle pain

To ease the pain, you can give your baby a topical anesthetic cream, gel or patch, such as EMLA™, which is safe for newborns.

“Some creams can take up to an hour to work and may need to be applied ahead of time,” said Dr. Blaichman. “For children under one year, you’ll want to apply the cream to the upper, outer part of each thigh.”

Ask your doctor to recommend a numbing cream if you are unsure which is best to use.

Another option is sugar water. Mix one teaspoon of white sugar with two teaspoons of distilled or boiled water and give it to your baby two minutes prior to receiving the needle. Use a dropper or syringe to place the sugar water in her mouth, or dip a pacifier into the water and give it to her before, during and after the needle.

3. Distract your baby

Distracting your baby can take the focus away from needle pain, but it’s best to use age-appropriate

methods. For example, a newborn is best distracted by being held and fed, while a one-year-old may be better distracted by blowing bubbles or watching a video on your cell phone.

“One of the best things you can do during the procedure is breastfeed your baby,” said Dr. Blaichman. “There’s sugar in breast milk, and because you’re holding your baby, you’re providing extra comfort.”

Another way to distract your baby is to hold her close and calmly sing a nursery rhyme or tell a story. Rocking her gently afterwards will provide additional comfort as well.

Remember, babies reflect their parent’s reactions, so the most important thing you can do is stay clam and positive before, during and after the needle.

More information on reducing your baby’s vaccination pain is available on the Canadian Paediatric Society’s website caringforkids.cps.ca