

## Needle Sticks – Extra Help for Caregivers



Fear of pain or memories of trauma at the time of a needle stick are common problems. Yet, needle sticks are a necessary part of health care. Vaccines prevent serious infections. Blood tests tell us how the body is working. They are key pieces in diagnosing and treating both acute and chronic illnesses.

Children and adults can have trouble with needlesticks. There are a number of strategies to try to help ease someone's fear and reduce their pain. Practice and planning can help.

Help Eliminate Pain in Kids & Adults (<https://helpkidspain.ca>), a Canadian team collects evidence and creates tools to improve pain care during needlesticks. They recommend a 5-P approach:

### Procedures:

- Make a plan.
- Ask for info to prepare before the visit when it is possible.
- Practice the plan at home to get ready.
- Try a social story and/or a play doctor kit to walk through the steps.
- Try words like “pinch” or “poke”.
- Ask for the trained team member who is calm and a good listener.
- Ask for a private space if that helps.
- Ask to give shots as quickly as possible.
- Ask for the most painful shot to be last.
- Plan what others can do to help during the stick.

### Psychological steps use the word C-A-R-D:

- Get **Comfortable**.
  - Use a preferred physical position. Sitting may promote a sense of control.
  - Wear comfortable clothes.
  - Bring a comforting item to hold.
- **Ask** questions. Ask for how you like to know when it will happen. Ask for a break if you need it.
- **Relax** so your muscles are loose. Take deep breaths. Blow bubbles or a pinwheel.
- **Distract** with a video, music, or talking.
- Praise all attempts.

### Physical steps and Pharmacology for numbing

- Hold an ice pack on the site for 3-5 seconds right before the stick. This numbs the skin for a short time.
- Ask about using a vapocoolant spray before the stick. This also is numbing.
- Ask about using an anesthetic cream on the site about 1 hour before the stick. Numbness lasts for 1-2 hours.
- Ask to use a Shot Blocker or Buzzy Bee that cools and vibrates.



### Processes:

- Share your Needle Stick Plan with the healthcare team.

