

Homework to Prepare for a Flu Shot

Use practice, praise, and play to help your child feel more comfortable with flu shots.

Practice these steps when your child is in a happy mood. Try to work on the steps a little every day for multiple days or weeks.

First Steps

- Talk about how nice the people are at the hospital.
- If you have a photo preparation book or video, review it with your child daily, starting a week before the appointment.
- Explain to your child they will be getting a flu shot. It will help their body to stay healthy during flu season.
- Remind your child that getting a flu shot is a quick procedure.
 - Practice counting and let your child know that it will take less than 10 seconds.
 - If you will be present during the procedure, let your child know that they could hold your hand or sit on your lap.
- Practice sitting still and holding your arm behind your back. This can decrease discomfort during the administration of the flu shot.
 - Have your child hold their arm behind their back and then keep it still. Praise your child for holding still.
- Practice cleaning the skin on their upper arm or thigh (wherever they will be getting the flu shot).
 - Use a cool, wet tissue with water first. Then if you have rubbing alcohol at home, practice with it. Talk positively about how cold it might feel and how it has a special smell.
 - Say for example, “This might feel kind of cold and smell kind of funny. I am going to use it to clean your skin before you get the flu shot”



Next Steps

- Practice giving a flu shot to a stuffed animal or doll with your child.
- Remind your child that the stuffed animal needs to stay still and can hold someone's hand to help them calm their body while getting the flu shot.
- Give the stuffed animal a fun toy or look at a book while getting the flu shot.
- If your child will get the flu shot in their upper arm, explain that if the stuffed animal holds their arm behind their back, they will not feel the shot as much.
- Use a wet tissue or paper towel to clean the upper arm of the stuffed animal.
- Use a toy medical play kit to show how the flu shot will look.
- Hold it up to arm of animal and say, “You will feel a quick poke but it will be done before we count to 10”, or “this is a poke and it will be really quick. Can you count to 10 with me?”
- When the flu shot is all done, give the stuffed animal a Band-Aid. Verbalize what a good job the stuffed animal has done holding still.

Final Steps

- Have your child play at being the patient.
- Give your child a break between each step.
- Praise your child for being calm and cooperative. If necessary, use a reward system for cooperative behavior.
- If your child tries to push your hands away, redirect your child's hands with a fun activity. For example, tell your child to hold the toy car or clap their hands during a favorite song.
- These steps should challenge your child, but if your child becomes upset, take a break and try again later.

Teaming up with a Therapist

If a therapist works with your child, ask the therapist to work on this homework with your child too.

Coping Skills

While preparing for a flu shot and during a flu shot, encourage your child to use coping skills.

Coping skills can be used in any situation that is difficult for your child.

Let your child know these are ways to calm the body and feel better. Choose a coping or relaxation method that you think your child will respond to best:

- Deep breathing - Have your child take 3-5 deep breaths. Encourage your child to watch his or her stomach rise and fall. Blow bubbles or blow into a pinwheel to encourage deep breathing.
- Counting - Count to 10 with your child and encourage participation.
- Pressure - Have your child squeeze both hands together or around a ball. Repeat five times.
- Listen to music – Play soothing music for your child to hear.
- Watch a video - Encourage your child to watch a favorite video to remain calm.

