Children Coming to Hospital

Hints & Tips for Parents

As a parent or carer you know your child best and there are lots of ways you can help make a hospital procedure – *such as a blood test, X-ray or scan* – better for them.

BEFORE THE PROCEDURE

- Make sure you know what will happen before and during the procedure (try looking for information on children's hospital websites).
- Tell staff if your child is very worried or has had a bad experience before, so they can give you extra support.
- Explain everything simply and honestly to your child and give them the chance to ask questions. They might want to know what will happen and how it will feel. Older children may want to think about what might help them if they feel worried.
- If your child is having a procedure which might hurt, like a blood test, don't tell them it won't hurt. Check if they need some local anaesthetic cream or pain relief medicine.
- Bring some things they like to help distract them on the day (like books, toys, games, bubbles or videos on your phone).
- If you don't want to be present during the procedure, tell a member of staff and let your child know you'll be nearby.

DURING THE PROCEDURE

BABIES

Hold your baby if possible, and gently pat or stroke them.

Offer your baby or child their dummy (if they have one).

Swaddle your baby.*

Give your baby a toy to hold.

Offer a small feed during the procedure, or five minutes before.*

Talk softly, sing or play music.

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TODDLERS AND PRE-SCHOOLERS

Sing or talk softly and calmly to your child.

Sit your child on your lap.*

Use pop-up books, sound books, favourite stories, music, light-up toys, videos, games or bubbles to distract your child.*

Give your child favourite toys or other comforting things to hold.

SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN

Sit your child on your lap.*

Talk about favourite or familiar things, or use your child's imagination to make up a story together.

Distract your child with a favourite book, game, toy, music or video.

Encourage your child to take slow deep breaths or blow bubbles with them.*

Talk softly and calmly to your child.

*If possible. Always check with staff first.

- Be positive and encouraging, and give your child lots of praise.
- Talk to your child in a calm quiet voice and try and be calm yourself, as they may pick up on your feelings.
- Don't tell them "It will be over soon" or that "It will be okay". This can make your child feel more anxious.
- Try not to be distracted by what's going on – give your child your full attention.
- Position yourself where your child can see and/or touch you. If possible, try to use skin-to-skin contact.
- Help your child choose a comfortable position for the procedure. You may be asked to help them keep still by sitting with them, cuddling or holding them. If you don't want to hold them, but would like to stay, this is okay.
- If your child cries, let them know it's okay to feel upset. If they become very upset, you can ask the staff if the procedure can be paused or stopped.

AFTER THE PROCEDURE

- What happens afterwards is just as important as before!
- If your child is upset, stay with them until they are calm.
- Give them lots of cuddles or hold hands.
- Talk to them about their experience and give them lots of praise for what went well.
- A baby or infant might like a feed, if staff agree.

GOT QUESTIONS?

If you have any further questions, you can always ask your child's doctor or nurse.

This leaflet is a general guide and you should always discuss your child's individual treatment with an appropriate member of staff.

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