

Top tips for supporting children and young people during vaccination

Getting vaccinated can be daunting for some people, particularly children and young people. They may be anxious, scared or needle phobic. This resource provides some tips and techniques for supporting them whilst they are receiving their vaccination.



Pre-Vaccination

There are things you can do to prevent this anxiety from building up whilst they are waiting for their turn to be vaccinated. For example:

- **Explain how vaccines work** to protect them and their friends and families. Use the same language that is in the information leaflets for their particular age group and provide these for them to read whilst waiting.
- **Use distraction techniques** such as chatting to them, suggesting they play a game on their phone, or having a TV on in the waiting area.
- **Be observant to non-verbal for signs of anxiety** such as being really quiet, talking loudly, biting their nails, looking at the exit or struggling to engage.
- **Consider taking particularly anxious people aside** for additional support or fast-tracking them.
- **If they are feeling anxious**, encourage them to take deep breaths. Provide them with a glass of water and a small snack (if you have one).
- **Use the 5 senses grounding technique to calm them down.** Ask them to identify one thing they can see, hear, touch, taste and smell.



During Vaccination

There are things you can do to help them to feel comfortable during the vaccination and make the experience a positive one.

Ensure you have a positive and calming demeanour:

- **Build a relationship** with them and their accompanying adult (if they have one). Introduce yourself and ask them some questions about themselves.
- **Consider your body language.** Be relaxed and open.
- **Show empathy.** Be sensitive to their anxiety and **be patient.**
- **Try making them laugh and remember to smile!**
- **Use a calming voice.** Remember, if you seem stressed it will make them stressed.

Techniques for managing anxiety during vaccination:

- **Break the process down into steps** so they don't feel overwhelmed and are aware of what is going to happen next.
- **Be honest with them.** Tell them they will feel it, but it will be over very quickly.
- Ask them to **think of a safe and relaxing place** in their mind.
- **Direct their attention away from the needle.**
- **If they feel faint**, use the applied tension technique to get their blood pressure back to normal. Ask them to tense the muscles in their arms and legs for 15 seconds, release, wait 30 seconds and then tense again. Repeat 5 times.

Post-Vaccination

Provide support and reassurance after they have received their vaccination:

- **Reassure them** that it is done and give them one of the "I've had my COVID vaccination" stickers.
- **Express that they have done an important thing** and have helped prevent their family and friends from getting sick.
- **If they feel faint**, encourage them to take deep breaths. Provide them with a glass of water and a small snack (if you have one).



Remember

- ✓ Ensure you have a calming demeanour.
- ✓ Be honest and make sure they understand what is happening at every stage.
- ✓ Offer water if they feel faint.
- ✓ Engage with their parents or guardians if they are accompanied by them. They will be able to provide help if needed.
- ✓ Use distraction techniques.
- ✓ Remind them of the benefits of having the vaccine to protect themselves and others.

Derbyshire Community Health Services: Fear of needles (needle phobia) – and how to deal with it!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wRjL8OEaoRw>

Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust: Overcoming your needle phobia (fear of needles).

<https://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/resources/patient-information/all-patients/overcoming-your-fear-of-needles.pdf>

NHS England: Fainting. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/fainting/>

NHS England: How to put someone into the recovery position. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TRQePNmR66w>

NHS England: Supporting people with a learning disability and autistic people to get the COVID-19 vaccination.

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2021/03/COVID-19-vaccination-training-for-clinicians-feb-2021.pdf>

POEMS for Children (charity). <https://www.poemsforchildren.co.uk/>

Public Health England: What to expect after your COVID-19 vaccination. Advice for children and young people.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1008090/PHE_12073_COVID-19_What_to_expect_CYP_leaflet.pdf

Public Health England: COVID-19 vaccination for children and young people aged 12 to 15 years.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1008730/PHE_12124_COVID-19_vaccination_for_at_risk_CYP_simple_text_leaflet.pdf

St John Ambulance: Fainting. <https://www.sja.org.uk/get-advice/first-aid-advice/unresponsive-casualty/fainting/>