

Helping Your Child with Pokes

✓ Make Them Comfortable



Comfort positions help give your child feelings of control. It is also an opportunity for parents and caregivers to comfort their child during medical procedures.

You can comfort your child by holding them during pokes in the following ways:

- **Back to Chest** – Place the child on your lap with their legs between your legs and your arms over their arms (typically works best for blood draws and accessing a port)
- **Chest to Chest** - Place the child on your lap with their chest facing your chest, with one arm out for the nurse and the other arm under your armpit (typically works best for injections ex: flu shot)

✓ Distraction



Some children like to look away during pokes, if this is your child you can bring something for them to look at or play.

Suggestions based on developmental level:

- Infant – familiar music, sensory toys (light up, spin, etc.)
 - Toddler/Preschool – sound books, cause and effect toys, familiar music and shows
 - School Age – look and find books, electronic games, I Spy, familiar music and shows
 - Teenager – electronic games, music and shows, I Spy, books
- It is okay for your child to play on a phone while receiving a poke.
 - If your child wants to watch, we encourage them to do so to promote feelings of control.
 - Our child life specialist has supplies for providing distraction as well, see below for details.

✓ Deep Breathing

Deep breathing is a proven way to calm the body and reduce pain. Encourage deep breathing during pokes by having your child “smell in flowers and blow out birthday candles.” Bubbles are also a great way to practice deep breathing.



✓ Counting



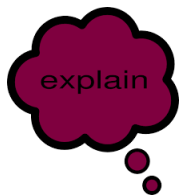
Counting down gives some children a sense of control, while it makes others more nervous.

Whether your child prefers counting or no counting, please let the nurse know so they can provide the best care for your unique child.

✓ Emotions

- ✓ Children, just like adults, can have big emotions. However, children are still learning how to express their emotions. Validating your child's emotions can help them recognize how they feel is normal. When children feel understood, they can recover from the distress faster.
- ✓ Try statements such as, **"It is okay to be sad that you need a poke today, but I know you are brave,"** and **"That was hard, but you did it!"**
- ✓ It is important to remember that crying is a healthy, natural part of coping. It is okay if your child cries during pokes. If your child is expressing high anxiety and/or worrisome behaviors, our child life specialist can help (see below for details).

✓ Appropriate Explanations



Suggestions to help you explain to your child why they need a poke, depending on the type of poke.

- IV: **"The nurses need to place a small straw in the blue lines that hold blood to give your body water and medicine."** If your child is concerned about the needle, you can reassure them that the needle comes out once the "small straw" is in place and only that plastic, bendy straw stays while the child needs medicine.
- Blood draw – **"The doctor needs to see if your blood needs any help to be healthy. There will be a small poke to help us get a little bit of blood. At the end you will get a band aide."** If your child is concerned that they will lose all their blood (a common concern among young children) you can assure them that their body makes more blood to replace what we need.
- Injection: **"The poke will give important medicine to your body. After you will get a band aide."** People often call injections "shots." Children can be very afraid of this word; however, the word "poke" means the same thing but is softer and less frightening.

✓ Pain Management

Ask your nurse, nurse practitioner, or doctor if there is a numbing agent they can use for the poke. Numbing agents usually take time to work, so you are interested, please ask at the start of your visit or before your next visit.



Child Life Specialist

Certified Child Life Specialists (CCLS) are trained medical professionals who provide evidence-based interventions to help infants, children, and teenagers cope with medical experiences. Child life interventions are based on play because play is how children learn, develop, express themselves, and feel safe. When children have a medical experience where they feel a sense of accomplishment, they can cope better during current and future medical experiences. In a practical sense, this can be the child coping well with a poke today and then having more confidence to cope well during future pokes.



Child life specialists can provide preparation and support during procedures in a few ways.

- ✓ Helping children understand what they will experience during medical procedures.
- ✓ Creating a plan with the child and family that involves relaxation, such as deep breathing techniques, and distraction to ease pain and build coping skills.
- ✓ Advocating for comfort measures, including comfort positions and pain management.

Your child life specialist for the outpatient clinic is Jessica Wadium, CCLS. Please ask for her if you believe your child would benefit from these services.