

# HOW TO HELP YOUR CHILD WITH THE COVID-19 VACCINE

*Tips for Parents from Child Life Specialists*

## TELL THE TRUTH

Honest, accurate, and age-appropriate explanations are best. It's ok to acknowledge that the injection might hurt but put that feeling in context (It's like a pinch or poke). If we don't define what "hurt" means, kids will fill in the blanks with their imaginations, often coming up with a story worse than reality! See our [sample script](#) for talking about the vaccine for ideas on explaining this to your child.



## NO SURPRISES

Talk with the physician or nurse administering the vaccine and share that it's best for your child to make a plan and stick to it. If the plan is to count to 3 and then give vaccine, follow the plan! Sometimes providers will "surprise" kids and go earlier than the plan. This can break trust and you can specifically request this not happen.

## ASK ABOUT PAIN MANAGEMENT

Before going for your child's vaccine appointment, ask what comfort measures are available. There are a number of topical numbing creams and sprays that can be used to minimize needle pain but some need time to take effect so it's best to know what the plan is BEFORE leaving home.



## ADVOCATE FOR COMFORT POSITIONING

Depending on the age of your child and their comfort with needle procedures, the medical professional giving the vaccine may want your child to be held to minimize movement. Ask if you can hold your child in a chest-to-chest hug position on your lap. This is less-threatening position than being held down by strangers and allows you to talk to, distract, and comfort your child while the doctor or nurse administers the vaccine.

*Child Life specialists are first responders for emotional support. They are trained professionals who provide in-the-moment evidence-based emotional support to children in a medical environment. Their role is to help children and families cope with stressful experiences in hospitals and other healthcare settings, and ultimately prevent or mitigate the harmful impacts of trauma in a medical environment.*

*Learn more about child life specialists at [www.childlife.org/the-child-life-profession](http://www.childlife.org/the-child-life-profession)*