

## Preparing your child for a medical procedure

### Explaining the Procedure

Honesty is important. Explain the procedure in simple steps and allow time for your child to ask questions. Use language they will understand without describing the intervention in detail. Allow your child to respond after you have explained each step. You can check their understanding by asking them questions.

### Timing is important

Think about how much notice your child typically needs for challenging tasks. Detailed information provided too early can potentially increase anxiety. Some children need more time to process. Information is generally best given earlier in the day to allow the child to ask questions, rather than immediately before bed.

### Plan ahead with the 5 W's

**Why** the procedure needs to happen – “the doctors need to have a look at your blood to help us know how to help your sore tummy”

**When** the procedure will occur – “We are going to go tomorrow morning”

**Where** it will happen, both location and on the body – “the nurse at our doctor’s surgery will give you the vaccination in your arm”

**What** might happen – “we’ll have some time to play in the waiting room and then go into another room. You can sit on my lap while the nurse looks at and feels your arm. Then they will take sample of your blood. You might feel a tight squeeze on your arm, and some pressure”

**What** do you have to do ... “your job is to try keep your arm very still. We can use our big belly breaths together”

**Who** will be there ... “I will come with you and there will be a person called a blood collector – that’s a funny sounding job isn’t it?”

Pain is an individual experience. Never tell children it won’t hurt. Use words such as “Other people say it feels a bit like..”

### Provide choices

Some children respond well to distraction. Other children like to watch and be involved. If they are old enough, ask them what they think they might want to do. Think about what might be useful - bubbles to blow, watching or playing something on a phone, fidget toys to hold, a story, a Find It book, or practicing some breathing to help feel calm. Include your child in the decision on what to take.