

How Can I Comfort My Baby During Shots?

My baby cries so much when getting a shot. How can I make this easier?

Getting shots can be tough on you and your child, but the benefits are worth the effort. Fortunately, you can do a few things to make the experience less painful and stressful.

For newborns or babies under 5 months old, try a method called the "5 S's" immediately after they get a vaccine. These are:

1. **swaddling** *right after* the shot. You also can swaddle (wrapping a baby tightly in a blanket like a "burrito") before the shot, but leave your baby's legs exposed for the vaccination.
2. placing the baby on their **side** or **stomach**
3. making **shushing** sounds in the baby's ear
4. **swinging** your baby in your arms or an infant swing
5. giving your baby the opportunity to **suck** (whether through breastfeeding, a bottle, or a pacifier)

Research has shown that doing at least 4 of the 5 S's greatly reduces the amount of time infants cry after getting a shot. If you're OK with breastfeeding your baby at the doctor's office (to fulfill the sucking recommendation), this alone can be an effective way to distract and calm your baby. You might even be able to do it while your baby gets the vaccine.

In some situations, a sugar water solution may be available. Dipping a pacifier into this solution, then giving it to a fussy baby may help soothe the child.

Before and after the shot is given, try applying gentle pressure and rubbing the skin around the injection site. This massage may prevent the area from feeling so painful.

For an older baby or a toddler, swaddling or shushing might not work. Try letting your child sit on your lap during the shot and distract them with a toy, book, or song. Try not to look upset or concerned. Children can pick up on a parent's anxiety, and it can make them anxious as well.

If your child has pain at the site where the shot was given or develops a fever and feels sick, ask the doctor about giving medicine such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen to ease symptoms.

Also, don't forget to praise your child afterward. A little positive reinforcement can make the next trip to the doctor easier. Try to do something fun after the appointment. A trip to the park or playground can make the day's memories happier ones.

Note: All information on KidsHealth® is for educational purposes only. For specific medical advice, diagnoses, and treatment, consult your doctor.

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