

**You can do this!**



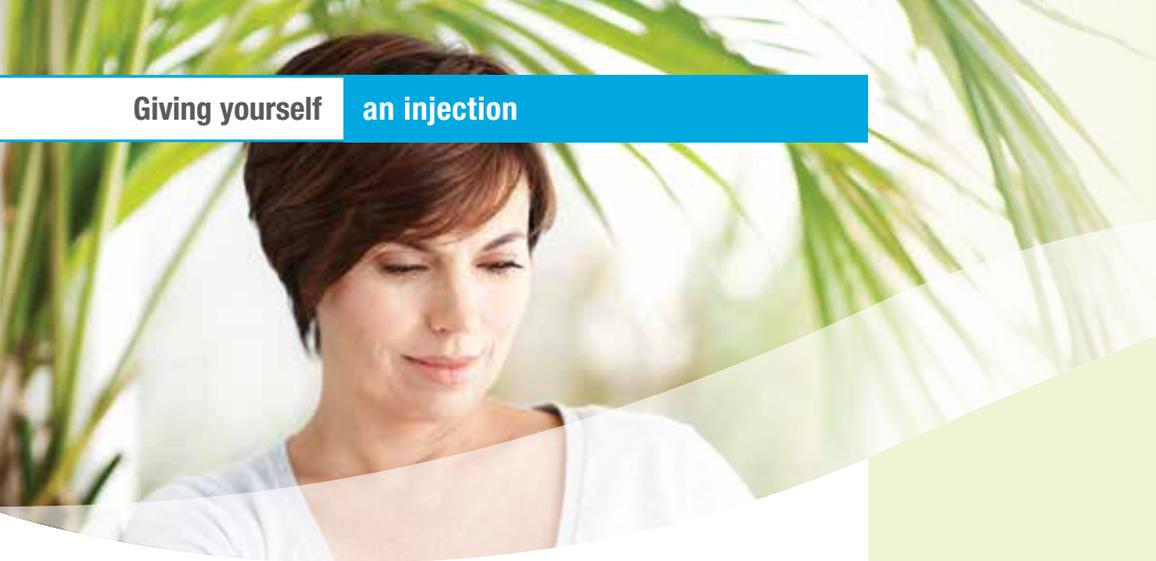
The **information,**  
**advice and support**  
you need to **prepare yourself or your child**  
for an **injection.**



**It's okay to be nervous.  
In fact, it's totally normal.**

No one truly looks forward to giving themselves, or their child, a needle. So it's perfectly normal to feel anxious at first. Now, you have a tool at hand to help you every step of the way. This guide contains valuable information from doctors, nurses and pain specialists, to help make your entire injection process as smooth and comfortable as possible. The suggestions on the following pages have been tried and tested. We encourage you to use them and see for yourself!

You will be instructed on the proper injection technique by your doctor or his/her nurse. The goal of this guide is to provide you with advice to help reduce the stress and pain that some people experience with injection. You shouldn't attempt an injection until you're confident on how to prepare and perform it. Be sure to speak with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist if you have any questions regarding you or your child's treatment or condition.



...> **Be prepared, patient and positive.**

If the idea of injecting yourself makes you uneasy, you're not alone. It's perfectly understandable to be hesitant when getting a needle, let alone giving yourself one. But as with most things, being prepared, patient and having a positive attitude will make the experience easier. And while you may never look forward to your injections, maybe over time you won't dread them either. It'll just be "one of those things in life".

**Like many people who have been successful with self-injecting, you too will feel proud that you've now taken control of an important part of your illness.**

...> **Get comfortable and relaxed.**

The following are some tips to help you be both physically and mentally prepared for your injection:

- Choose a comfortable environment
- Make sure everything you need for your injection is close at hand
- Take your time and avoid rushing through the procedure
- If you have a special relaxation technique, by all means use it
- If you don't, deep rhythmic belly breathing is a simple and effective way to relax
- You can also try mind visualization to create a calm relaxing image to help soothe you
- If you take the time to pause briefly, use your relaxation techniques at each step, it can really help keep stress under control
- Keeping a record of your injections is always a good idea too – many people like to use a diary or calendar



...> Know that you can manage your fear.

Fear of injection is common and is related to several psychological issues. These issues are manageable and generally fall into three basic categories:

- Anticipated pain
- Needle anxiety
- Attitude regarding injections

**As humans, it's perfectly normal for us to fear certain things. When we're faced with uncertainty or feel threatened, fear is our body's natural response to prepare for action. This means our attention becomes focused on the fear. Our body tenses and we breathe faster. That's why it's helpful to try and be in a relaxed state while injecting.**

To help calm yourself, try the following strategies:

- Redirect any fearful thoughts to more helpful and realistic ones: "If I take it one step at a time, I'll be ok"; or "This isn't the first time I've been afraid and made it through in the end"
- Distract yourself before your injection – try counting backwards from 109 by 3s
- As the experience of pain is increased when you're focused on the injection, if your mind is elsewhere occupied, the pain may be less

Did you know that some people find that if they approach their concerns about injections thoughtfully, they can overcome them? The following tips and information can help reassure you:

- Psychologists agree that fears are manageable when fears are faced
- The trick is to confront your fears in a way that puts you in control
- This helps you build the small successes that lead to even greater ones
- 1 in 10 people have needle phobia, which can be managed over a few meetings with a psychologist
- For the 9 in 10 people who experience fear not phobia – fear is more manageable
- Even needle phobias are manageable when you focus on coping strategies and have gradual exposure to the feared aspects of injecting

***"I found it got easier and easier with each injection. I'm a pro now!" – Richard***

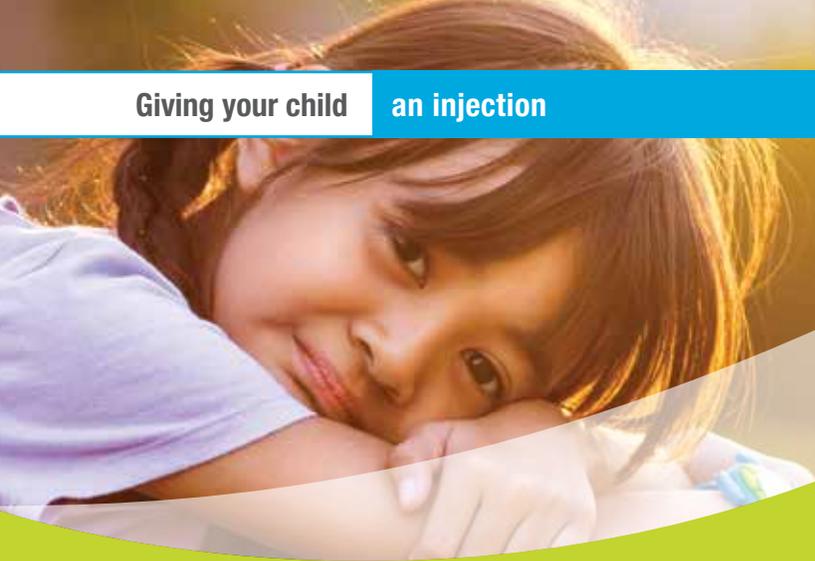
...> You can ease the pain.

If you find needle pain especially uncomfortable the following suggestions can help:

- Try applying a pain relieving cream 30 to 60 minutes beforehand – topical anaesthetics are available without a prescription; they may cause temporary skin discolouration, but are generally well-tolerated (always check with your healthcare professional first)
- If your medication is refrigerated, ask your pharmacist if it can be removed from the fridge 15 to 20 minutes before the injection, to allow it to warm to room temperature
- Cold compresses or a cold pack may also help
- Use a new injection site each time
- Rub the skin around the site **before** its disinfection with the alcohol pad (swab)

...> It's okay to ask for help.

If you're unsure of something or need help, don't hesitate to contact your healthcare professional. If this is your first injection, it's important that you ask for all the support and information you need to have a comfortable, positive experience. Often, a little bit of advice can make the difference between having a good or bad injection experience. Many support programs allow you to receive injection assistance at your home, in a pharmacy or at your doctor's clinic.



## Meet Fanny, age 8

**“There’s lots you can do to help make my injection easier!”**

Using the right strategies before, during and after their injection can make all the difference in the world. It’s in the things you say. The things you do. The expression on your face. All can go a long way toward easing both the physical and emotional pain of giving them an injection. Needle fears are real. But by using a few simple strategies, you can change the way your child, and you, feel about it. Did you know that using reassuring language can actually make kids *more* nervous? It’s better to take their mind off the injection altogether, through distraction and relaxation.



## Words matter.

As a parent, you know that what you say can have as big an influence on your child's behaviour as what you do. This is especially true when it comes to giving your child a needle. Saying the right things in a calm and normal voice sends a positive message to children and even has a calming effect on *you*. Use age-appropriate words and be honest, without focusing on the pain or discomfort. There's no need to encourage your child to expect the worst, when it may not even hurt that much.

### Don't tell me:

- It won't hurt
- It's going to be OK
- It's going to be over soon
- That you know I'm scared
- That you're sorry to be doing this

*Saying these things makes me feel worse.  
It's better to just distract me and get my mind off it.*

### Do tell me:

- Why I need a needle
- What will happen
- How it will feel
- How I can help
- What you'll do in case it hurts
- What I can do to take my mind off it
- How well I did when it's over!

*When you do this, it helps to calm me down  
'cause then I know what's going to happen.*



**“Here’s what helps when giving me my injection.”**

...➤ A little preparation goes a long way.

- Acknowledge your child’s anxiety, but at the same time, tell them why they need an injection  
*“We’re doing this to help you feel better.”*
- Explain what will happen in simple terms, without going into too much detail  
*“Your medicine goes into your skin using a tube called a syringe.”*
- Tell your child what they may feel  
*“You might feel a little pinch and some pressure.”*
- Say what they can do to help  
*“You can be a big help by holding real still and breathing slowly.”*
- If your child is under 4 years old, only tell them they are going to get their injection right before you do it. If they are older, you can let them know a day or two in advance

...> Doing something to help ease the pain.

If your child finds needle pain especially uncomfortable the following suggestions can help:

- Try applying a pain relieving cream 30 to 60 minutes beforehand – topical anaesthetics are available without a prescription; they may cause temporary skin discolouration, but are generally well-tolerated (always check with your healthcare professional first)
- If your medication is refrigerated, ask your pharmacist if it can be removed from the fridge 15 to 20 minutes before the injection, to allow it to warm to room temperature
- Cold compresses or a cold pack may also help
- Use a new injection site each time
- Rub the skin around the site **before** its disinfection with the alcohol pad (swab)

...> Distraction works.

Diverting your child's attention before, during and after the injection can be really helpful. The following distractions are both fun and effective:

*For younger children*

- Blow bubbles
- Try counting, singing
- Offer them a favourite toy
- Rubbing the skin on another part of their body can make a soothing difference

*For older children*

- Talk
- Play music
- Watch a video
- Play a video game

Getting your child to focus on something other than the injection is key. If your child is in pain, try visualizations like:

*Let the pain just flow out your body, down the chair and onto the floor. Good, that's it... just let it go.*

### So does relaxation.

- Deep and rhythmic belly breathing can reduce pain and improve self-control
- Practice belly breathing with your child before and during injection
- Breathe deep down, so your stomach expands, then together exhale slowly
- You can combine this with blowing bubbles or a pinwheel
- Younger children also feel relaxed when held or hugged
- If your child is a little older, make sure they are sitting comfortably
- Hold their hand or rub their arm before injecting

### It helps to listen.

Children often have helpful suggestions for how to manage their pain. Listen to what your child has to say. Letting them ask questions and express their feelings involves them in the procedure, which can be comforting. Use your child's imagination to make the shift from being anxious and frightened to being relaxed and calm. You can learn a lot by listening to what your child says and adjusting your approach accordingly.

### And give them some control.

Giving your child some control over their injections makes them feel more confident and grown up. Children who decide where to sit or which spot to be injected may be calmer and will probably experience less pain than a child who is not involved in the process. Having your child place a sticker on a calendar or make an entry in a diary, can be a fun way to keep them engaged.

Injections also seem to go easier when you make a routine out of them, such as sticking to a certain time or day of the week. Try to avoid giving injections during busy family times or in places your child considers as 'safe', such as in their bedroom.

.....> **Injection tips & tricks.**

**Do:**

- Speak with a soft, normal voice
- Keep your explanations simple
- Acknowledge their feelings
- Tell them what you'll do if it hurts
- Give them some control
- Use deep and steady breathing to relax
- Use distraction to take their mind off things
- Let them participate
- Offer a comforting touch
- Give positive feedback
- Praise them afterwards
- Rub the skin around the site before injecting
- Use a topical anaesthetic cream for severe needle fears (always check with your healthcare professional first)
- Follow the injection procedure

**Don't:**

- Give false reassurance; it won't help
- Focus on the pain
- Say words like "hurt", "pain" or "shot"

.....> **Resources to make injections easier.**

While no one loves getting a needle, injections don't have to be a scary or intimidating experience. In addition to support programs, you can learn a lot about giving yourself or your child an injection at the websites listed below. After all, since injections are going to be a part of your life, you may as well do everything in your power to make them as easy and comfortable as possible.

[www.immunize.ca](http://www.immunize.ca)

[www.pediatric-pain.ca](http://www.pediatric-pain.ca)

[www.aboutkidshealth.ca](http://www.aboutkidshealth.ca)



.....➤ **Remember – you can do this!**

The information in this booklet has been thoroughly researched by both doctors and pain specialists. Most importantly for you, the advice and techniques you learn here can make your personal injection experience more comfortable, both physically and emotionally. Remember, the fact that you've decided to take care of you or your child's treatment already shows your dedication to making your injections a success. Bravo!

**If this is your first injection, it's important to ask for all the support and information you need to have a comfortable, positive experience.**