Immunizations protect your child!

HELPING YOUR CHILD WITH NEEDLE FEAR

Getting a needle can be scary

You can help your child handle getting a needle.

Developed by Mary Ives, 2008

• Give limited choices and let your child decide.
  * “Would you like to bring teddy or a truck?”
  * “Would you like to wear a blue or red shirt?” (Use a short sleeved shirt).

• No threats, bribes or blame!
  * Children do better when they feel better. Threats make people feel worse.
  * Bribes are a poor substitute for willing cooperation.
  * Blaming leaves your child feeling like a victim instead of a person who can handle difficult situations.

• Celebrate effort no matter how small. It may take more than one try to gather the courage to proceed.

This is a great time to connect with and encourage your child.
• Immunization is a time for your child to learn how to handle fear and other strong feelings.

• Your child does not need to agree with you that getting a needle is a good idea.

• However, you can help your child gather courage when you show that you understand what he or she is feeling.

• You can do this by saying what you think your child is feeling. For example, “You look nervous. I can see this is hard for you.”

• Express faith in your child’s ability to cope: “I know this is hard, still, I think you can handle it.”

Try not to judge or pity your child for feeling afraid. Your child will do better if you remain calm, firm and kind.

If you have a strong fear of needles yourself, find a way to handle your feelings calmly. Your child will be watching you.

• You might bring another adult who is calmer about needles.

• Take slow deep breaths.

• Blowing bubbles can slow down fast, shallow breathing. You and your child can practice calm breathing ahead of time by playing with bubbles.

For example, “It may hurt a bit” is a true statement and builds trust. At the same time, show that you believe your child can handle the hurt.