A Parent's Guide to Help Children in Pain

St. John's Children's Hospital 800 E Carpenter Springfield, IL 62769 217-544-6464





Find your child's age group and read the tips below.

For other tips on pain and pain relief, see the *Children's Hospital*Handbook: How Can I Help My Child Deal with Pain?; How Do I

Measure My Child's Pain; and What If My Child Needs a Procedure?

Infants - Birth to 12 months

Infants lack words to express presence, location and intensity of pain. They show discomfort through body movements, facial expressions, changes in body state and crying.

You can help ease your infant's pain.

- Request to remain with her during procedures.
- Encourage him to suck.
- Play lullaby music and touch her gently.
- Swaddle and rock her.
- Request to use Sucrose during painful procedures.
- Turn down lights and avoid loud noises.

Toddlers – 1 to 3 years of age

Toddlers have limited words to tell others they are in pain. When in pain, they may clench their teeth or fists. They may also rock back and forth. Some toddlers regress and wet their bed or such their thumb. They may not talk much. Others display aggressive behaviors like kicking.

You can help ease your toddler's pain.

- Ask to remain with her during procedures.
- Use medical play to help him learn about the hospital and procedures.
- Keep favorite items such as a blanket, toy or stuffed animal close.
- Distract her with toys like bubbles and books.
- As for a numbing agent for procedures that involve an injection or needle stick.
- Ask for procedures to be performed in the procedure room.
- Keep the hospital routine as normal and consistent as possible.





Preschool - 3 to 6 years of age

Preschool children are self-centered. They have the ability to talk about pain and fears. They fear bodily injury, so they may deny having pain to avoid shots. Pain or shots may be viewed as punishment. Preschoolers love pretend play. Magical and fantasy thinking is common

You can help ease your preschool child's pain.

- Ask to remain with her during procedures.
- Use medical play to help him learn about the hospital and procedures.
- Encourage her to handle medical supplies through play.
- Explain procedures in clear, simple terms that he will understand.
- Reinforce that illness, tests or procedures are not her fault.
- Involve him in his care. For example, let him put a band-aid on his skin.
- Distract her with blowing bubbles and looking at books.
- Ask for a numbing agent for procedures involving injections and needle sticks.
- Request the procedure room for painful procedures.
- Reward her for cooperation.

School Age – 7 to 12 years of age

School age children can verbalize pain with descriptive words. As they learn more about how the body works, however, their fear of bodily harm increases. They are beginning to develop the concept of death. School age kids also begin to understand the concept of time. They can understand that pain will not last forever. However, they may deny pain in order to appear brave. School age children want a sense of control over their body.

You can help ease your school-age child's pain.

- Ask to remain with him during procedures.
- Use play and simple explanations to prepare her for procedures.
- Involve him during procedures. He may want to watch.
- Offer choices during painful procedures.
- Coach her through the procedure. Remind her that the pain will not last forever.
- As for the procedure room for procedures.
- Request a numbing agent for injections for needle sticks.
- Provide distraction such as blowing bubbles or looking at books.
- Encourage her to relax. Try quiet music, guided imagery or deep breathing.
- Reward the child for cooperation and positive outcomes.
- Stress the positive outcome that is related to a painful experience.





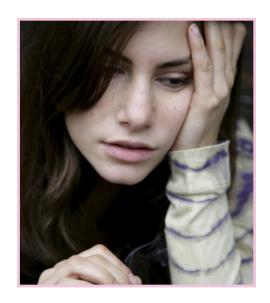


Teens - 13 to 17 years of age

Teens can verbalize, identify and describe pain – both physical and psychological. They may experience extreme mood and behavioral changes as a result of pain. They fear losing control over their body and experiences. Teens also fear the threat of physical harm to their body. Being in the hospital is hard because they have a problem with dependence on others.

You can help ease your teen's pain.

- Ask to remain with teen during procedures.
- Prepare her for procedures. Provide explanations. Encourage her to ask questions.
- Coach him through the procedure.
- Remind her that the pain will not last forever.
- Request a numbing agent for injections and needle sticks.
- Stress positive outcomes that are related to a painful experience.
- Encourage him to relax. Try quiet music, guided imagery, deep breathing or massage.
- Involve her in all decisions related to her care.
- Encourage him to socialize with friends and family while in the hospital.





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