



# IMPROVING THE VACCINATION EXPERIENCE:

What is CARD for parents and caregivers

The **CARD system (Comfort, Ask, Relax, Distract)** provides groups of strategies that can be used before and during vaccination to make the experience a more positive one for you and your child. Learn how you and your child can **play your cards** to reduce the stress and pain associated with vaccinations. To learn more about CARD, go to [CardSystem.ca](http://CardSystem.ca).

## Comfort

Encourage your child to prepare for the vaccination. They can play the [CARD game](#) to learn about coping strategies they want to use. Some things they can do to feel comfortable are:

- Wear something that let's their upper arm be reached easily.
- Choose a comfort item to bring such as a favourite toy.
- Think about the [position](#) they would like to be in (sitting up or lying down) and how you can help (e.g., holding their hand).

## Ask

Invite your child to ask questions to help them be more prepared for their vaccination. If you can, answer your child's questions or search for the information together. If your child does not seem interested or is not ready to talk, that is OK. Tell them they can always come to you if they have questions. To help your child be more prepared for their vaccination they can ask questions such as:

- What will happen? What will it feel like?
- Can I have a snack?
- Can I use [numbing cream](#) to dull the pain?
- Can I have privacy?

## Relax

Your actions and words can influence your child's reaction. If you are calm and use your normal voice, your child will feel that everything is OK. Use the fact sheets on [what to say](#), [how you can act](#), and [what you can do](#) to promote coping. To help your child stay calm and relaxed they can:

- Practice relaxation techniques such as deep belly breathing (like blowing up a balloon).
- Practice positive self-talk (tell yourself you can handle this).
- Have someone with them to support them.

## Distract

Focusing on the vaccination can make some people more nervous. Try to limit the amount of time your child is focused on the vaccination if it is making them nervous. They can use distraction to take their mind off the vaccination.

- It does not matter what the distraction is, as long as your child is actually distracted. Involve your child in choosing the distraction they want to use. It could be a game on a smartphone, a video, a funny joke, a [search and find activity](#) or talking.