



IMPROVING THE EXPERIENCE:

What health-care providers can say during medical procedures

The words and actions of health-care providers can influence how someone experiences medical procedures. Some behaviours can promote coping while others can increase distress. Use this fact sheet to find suggestions on ways to promote coping and a more positive experience. Share our resources for parents and caregivers on [what they can say](#), [how they can act](#) and [what they can do](#) to help their child during medical procedures.



To learn more about CARD, go to CardSystem.ca.

BE CALM

Foster a calm environment and be positive. If you are calm and use your normal voice, others will pick up on this and feel that everything is going to be OK.

TRY SAYING THIS

- ✓ “Let’s work together to make your experience as comfortable as possible.” (promotes calmness)

INSTEAD OF THIS

- ✗ “There are so many people here today and I don’t have a lot of time! Let’s just get it done quickly.” (makes others nervous)

BE POSITIVE

Focus your attention on helpful things and on things that are going well. Use praise to encourage and recognize the efforts patients are making as this can help them to remember their experience in a positive way for the next time.

TRY SAYING THIS

- ✓ “You did a great job relaxing your arm, etc.” (positive focus)
- ✓ “Thanks so much for coming in today to have your procedure done. Let me know what you think helped and how I can help to make it even better the next time.” (positive focus)

INSTEAD OF THIS

- ✗ “Finally, it’s over; that was hard!” (negative focus)
- ✗ “This took a long time. Maybe you should get your procedure done somewhere else next time.” (negative focus)



PROVIDE INFORMATION USING NEUTRAL LANGUAGE

Provide information about why the procedure is needed, what will happen and what they can do to cope. Some patients want more information and others want less. Tailor the amount of information to the needs and preferences of the patient so there are no surprises (either too little or too much information). Do not use words that are perceived as threatening as they can increase fear.

TRY SAYING THIS

- ✓ “I am going to do the procedure now. Do you want me to explain what I am doing?” (neutral language, provides tailored information)

INSTEAD OF THIS

- ✗ “You are getting a needle jab today.” (fear-inducing language, information too vague)

INVITE PATIENTS TO PARTICIPATE

Ask about past experiences and preferences for coping. Make sure to offer choices that are reasonable. Let patients know you are there to support them. Do not impose coping strategies.

TRY SAYING THIS

- ✓ “Some people are bothered by needles and others are not. How do you feel about needles? What CARDS (coping strategies) would you like to play to help you with your needle today?” (answers questions, invites participation)
- ✓ “Do you want me to let you know when I am doing the procedure?” (invites participation, provides reasonable amount of control)
- ✓ “You can watch or look away if you want, it is up to you.” (invites participation)

INSTEAD OF THIS

- ✗ “You will be okay; there is nothing to worry about.” (vague reassurances, does not invite participation)
- ✗ “Tell me when you want me to do it.” (allows too much control)
- ✗ “Now look away.” (imposes coping strategy)

ANSWER QUESTIONS

Acknowledge concerns and provide balanced information. Do not minimize or dismiss patient’s concerns.

TRY SAYING THIS

- ✓ “Some people say it feels like a pinch or pushing and others say they don’t feel much of anything. Let me know how it feels for you afterward.” (answers questions, provides balanced information)

INSTEAD OF THIS

- ✗ “This is going to hurt.” OR “This hurts me more than it hurts you.” (fear-inducing language, false suggestion/dishonest)
- ✗ “This won’t hurt.” (negative focus, false suggestion/dishonest)