



**“Before anything else, preparation is the key to success.”**

- Alexander Graham Bell



**FMCI**  
Family Medical Coping Initiative

The **Family Medical Coping Initiative** is dedicated to improving coping skills for patients and families dealing with medical conditions and care. We provide educational programs for staff and caregivers of Boston Children’s Hospital patients and make medical coping resource information available to clinicians and families. Though we are unable to see patients and their families for psychotherapy, we aim to provide support via online webinars, materials, and consultation to staff.

We believe in the power of children and families to grow and make changes that support their own psychological health and wellbeing in the face of medical challenges—throughout the life of the child and the family.

We believe that patients, caregivers, and staff can work together as a team to improve medical experiences for children and their families.



Scan this QR code, with your phone’s camera, for the FMCI Family Webinar about this topic.



**Boston Children’s Hospital**

Where the world comes for answers

# How can you help your child get ready for a vaccination or other pokes?

*Preparing your child is very important. This practical guide, from the Family Medical Coping Initiative (FMCI), is designed to help you and your child prepare for their next visit.*



**FMCI**  
Family Medical Coping Initiative



**Boston Children’s Hospital**  
Where the world comes for answers

## PREPARE YOUR CHILD FOR SUCCESS

### Help your child practice with play about pokes.

- Encourage your child to practice on a doll with a pretend medical kit or an oral syringe.
- Show your child what it means to cope well or feel good at the doctor's office.
- **Join in on the play!**



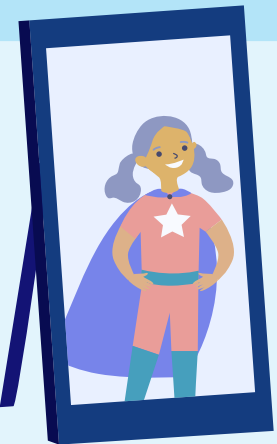
### Help your child practice relaxation breathing.

- Breathe slowly and count: "In through your nose 1,2,3 and out through our mouth 1,2,3."
- Pretend to blow out birthday candles.



### Help child practice staying still.

- Pretend to be frozen, and then wiggle, wiggle, wiggle!



### Help your child make a positive thinking script.

- "I don't like it, but then I will have less of a chance of getting sick."
- "It is uncomfortable, but then it's done and I get to do something fun."
- **"I can do it!"**

## ADVOCATE FOR YOUR CHILD

### Ask for pain control before the poke.

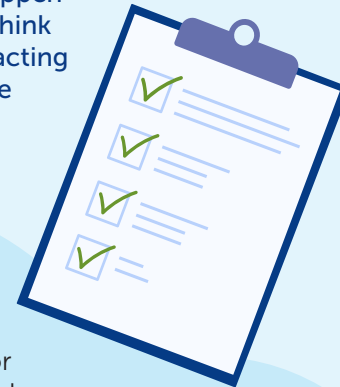
- (A few days or a week before) You, as the caregiver, can ask for ice for a vaccine or numbing medicine for an IV or blood draw.
- Infants can nurse/have a bottle to minimize their discomfort.
- You can ask your infant's clinician whether they can be given sugar water for comfort.



## CREATE A PLAN FOR THE DAY

Discuss with your child what will happen before, during and after the poke. Think in advance about relaxing and distracting activities to do from before the poke through the finish. You can plan to:

- Sing a song.
- Watch a video or play a game on a phone.
- Look at interactive books or explore the room together.
- Have your child sit on your lap or hold your hand to get comfortable.
- Let the child know what will happen right after the poke.
- **Give a big hug, a treat, small prize, or a stop at the park or special place.**



## MANAGE THE POKE

Manage your own anxiety before and during the poke. Try to model coping as an example for your child.

- Children can tell when parents are anxious, and this can make them scared too.

### Be honest using child friendly language.

- "It might feel like a pinch, but we can do things to make it easier."

### Remind your child that you will be with them.

Remind your child about the plan for the day and for the activity/distraction during the poke.

### Share the "why this is happening" with simple words:

- "The medicine will help keep you be safe and healthy."
- "The little bit of blood they take will help us learn why you are not feeling well. It will help the doctors know how to help you be healthy."

### Make the child feel some control by giving them realistic choices:

- "Which arm?", "What color band aid?", "Do you want to watch or look away?"

### Ask if a child life specialist is available to help.

## AFTER THE POKE

### Follow through on your after-the-poke plan.

- Remind the child about what went well.
- Remind the child about the positive results that will come from the poke.
- Stay positive! Do not remind the child of any problems that occurred.
- Children will remember the compliments that they receive.
  - "I can tell that was hard, but you tried your best!"
  - "You stayed very still. Good job!"
  - **"You did it! You should be proud!"**

