

Comfort care

Tips to support pediatric patients and families

When a child has a procedure, there are things you can do before, during, and afterwards to make it a more positive experience—both for the child and the parents.

Before

...Learn from parents and history

- Make sure the procedure is needed. There may be other options.
- Get the equipment and the treatment room ready first. Avoid safe zones (child's room, playrooms).
- Contact Child Life for support.
- Find out if the child has had this treatment before. If so, note what has and has not worked well.
- Describe what you are doing in a way the child and the parents can understand.
- Ask parents how their child copes best. Find out if the child wants to watch the procedure.
- Offer additional distractions based on the child's developmental level.
- Use the appropriate pain scale to determine the child's pain score. Plan for medication if needed.
- Assign roles. Have one person talk with the child to reduce anxiety.
- Do not bribe, threat, or give false reassurances to the child.

During

...Customize your approach to the child

- The same approach won't work for every child. Be ready to stop, regroup, and tailor your approach.
- Have the child in a seated position, if possible.
- Hurrying increases anxiety. Be calm and confident, and do not rush.



- Engage parents. They can hold the child, hold the child's hand, or distract the child.
- Involve the child in the procedure, if possible.
- Give praise, praise, and more praise.
- Determine the child's pain score.

After

...Document for the future

Praise the child and the parents. Determine the child's pain score. Later, have the team evaluate the process critically. Ask:

- Did this go well? What could we do better next time? What did the child respond well to? Dislike?
- Document the answers in the child's chart to help improve the process.