



# IMPROVING THE VACCINATION EXPERIENCE:

What health-care providers can say

The words and actions of health-care providers can influence how someone experiences vaccination. Some behaviours can promote coping while others can increase distress. Use this fact sheet to learn ways to promote coping and more positive vaccination experiences. 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 vaccination.



To learn more about CARD, go to [CardSystem.ca](http://CardSystem.ca).

## BE CALM

Foster a calm environment and be positive. If you are calm and use your normal voice, others will feel that everything is OK.

### TRY SAYING THIS

- ✓ “Let’s work together to make your vaccination experience comfortable.” (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 people are making. Congratulate people on getting vaccinated and help them to remember their vaccination 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 get vaccinated. 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 vaccinated somewhere else next time.” (negative focus)

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## PROVIDE INFORMATION USING NEUTRAL LANGUAGE

Provide information about why vaccination is needed, what will happen and what they can do. Some people want more information and others want less. Tailor the amount of information to the needs and preferences of the person. Obtain permission for the level of information the person expects 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 giving you the vaccine now. Do you want me to explain what I am doing?” (neutral language, provides tailored information)

### INSTEAD OF THIS

- ✗ “You are getting your shot 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 people 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 vaccine today?” (answers questions, invites participation)
- ✓ “Do you want me to let you know when the vaccine will be given?” (invites participation, provides reasonable amount of control)
- ✓ “Let me know if you want to look.” (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 people’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)