

Children's Memorial

# Supporting Patients Through Procedural Hurts

"Tricks" for parents, caregivers,  
and support staff



Children's<sup>®</sup>  
Memorial  
Hospital

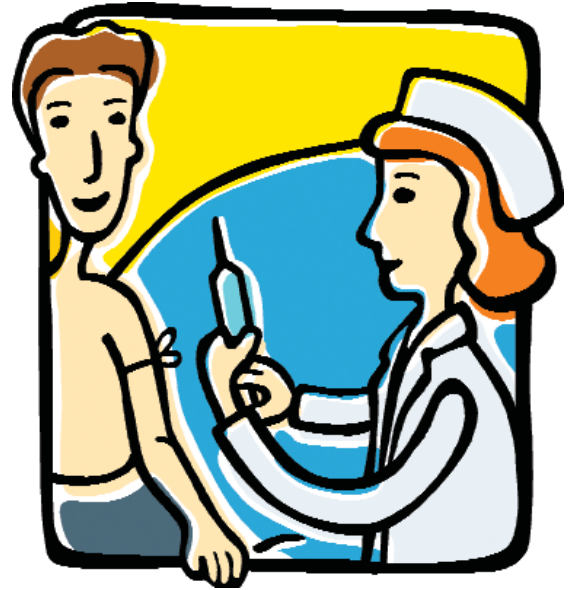
Where kids come first.™

# How to use these cards

These cards offer helpful hints for adults (parents or caring adults who are assisting) to help children undergoing potentially painful procedures. The tricks featured can help children manage pain. Each page has a different trick to try. Children often find one or two quite helpful, and get better at using them with practice. Find out which one or two the child likes best and encourage him/her to practice whenever he/she can.

These cards are primarily aimed at school-aged children, approximately 5 to 12 years of age. If the child you are caring for is younger, try doing activities during a procedure to distract his or her attention.

For older children and adolescents, the imagery exercises on these cards may seem a bit youthful, but the concepts are relevant. Discuss with your teenager ways that he or she could change the scripts to be more appropriate for him or her. Listening to music is something that a lot of teenagers find useful to relax their minds and bodies. Feel free to bring music from home or ask a staff member if any music listening devices are available for use during a procedure.



# Can I stay with the patient?

Most of the time a caring adult can help make a procedure more tolerable for children. You can stay with your child during his/her treatment if you are comfortable. You are NOT in the way. *(If necessary, the medical staff will let you know if and why you cannot stay.)*

You are an essential part of the team to help your child.



# Children and Pain

At Children's Memorial Hospital we believe that:

- Infants and children of all ages can feel pain.
- Children don't always tell people when they feel pain.
- Children need to know the truth about painful procedures.
- Most pain due to medical procedures can be reduced by using medications, distraction, holding, and comforting.
- Some signs of pain in infants and children include crying, irritability, fast heart beat, fast breathing, and holding the painful site.
- Pain that is not treated may get in the way of physical and emotional healing.

# The Pediatric Bill of Rights

Children have the right to cry if they need to, laugh if they want to, and be mad if it helps make them feel better.

They also have the right to:

- Have a parent or another adult with them
- Tell us when and where something hurts
- Ask for something to make the pain better
- Ask questions if they don't understand something
- Watch a movie, listen to music, play games, or read a book to help make them feel better while they are here.



# Tips for helping during a procedure

## ATTENTION HELPERS:

Stay near the child's face. This helps comfort and distract him/her. Help the child choose a position that will comfort him/her, i.e. on your lap facing forward and hugging you. There are lots of positions of comfort. You can ask your medical staff for suggestions. Remember, being held feels different than being held down.

Hold the child's hand. Encourage him/her to hold, squeeze, look at, or think about a favorite thing, or think about a favorite place which will comfort him/her.

Be an active participant by using the items in the comfort cart, tell funny stories or jokes, or sing songs together. You can also try some of the "tricks" on the following pages.



# Introducing a child to our helpful “tricks”

## ATTENTION HELPERS:

In a gentle and soothing voice, read this to the child:

*Did you ever have a time when you got a cut or a bruise when you were playing and didn't really notice it until later?*

(Wait for child's response, talk about examples.)

*Sometimes you are so busy doing other things and having fun, that your brain doesn't have time to pay attention to the pain. Sometimes you can get hurt and not even know it! There are some things you can do to trick your brain into not feeling any pain. Here a few tricks that you can try right now.*



# The Imagination Trick

In a gentle and soothing voice, read this to the child, pause as needed for time to visualize and feel.

*I am wondering if you can close your eyes and imagine yourself in a favorite place doing something you really like to do. See if you can get such a clear picture of this place that you can hear the sounds, smell the smells – feel what it is like with all of your senses. Enjoy your favorite place for as long as you would like. When you are ready you can come back from your favorite place and open your eyes. You can go back to your favorite place anytime you want to.*

Practice this often. You can visit many places in your imagination.



# The Deep Breathing Trick

In a gentle and soothing voice, read this to the child:

*Sometimes just thinking about getting a needle stick (or other procedure) can make us worry. When we feel stressed or worried, our breathing changes. We take short and shallow breaths rather than long and deep breaths. Long, slow, deep breaths can help us feel more comfortable and more relaxed. Let's try taking some deep breaths together:*

*Put your hand on your tummy just above your belly button. Now take a nice big breath all the way down to your belly button, hold it, and then let go. Again, nice deep breath, hold, and let go. One more time – nice deep breath, hold, and let go. You may find it helpful to count slowly 1-2-3-4 as you breath in and 1-2-3-4 as you breath out. Notice how much more relaxed you can feel with each breath you take.*

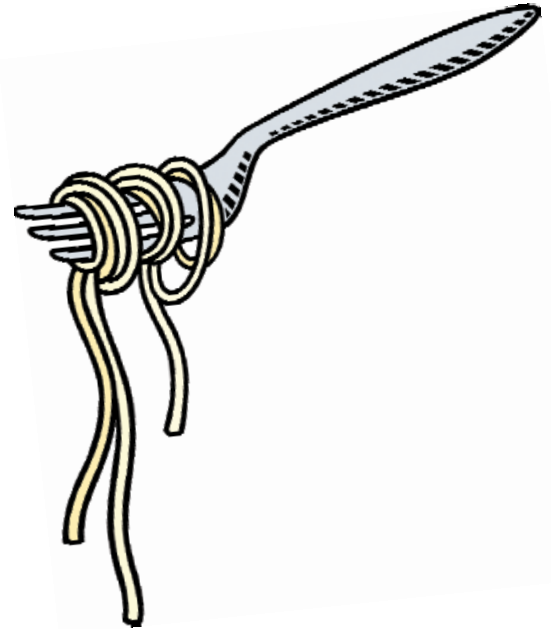


# The Relax-Your-Body Trick

In a gentle and soothing voice, read this to the child:

*When you worry and your muscles get tight, your pain can feel worse. When you relax your body you can make any hurt feel much better. Let's try this trick to relax your body.*

*Make your whole body really stiff and tight by squeezing all your muscles really hard – your face, your shoulders, your tummy, your arms, your legs, everything. Now let go of all that tightness and let your body get loose like a noodle. Do this several times so that you can become as relaxed as a bowl of spaghetti!*

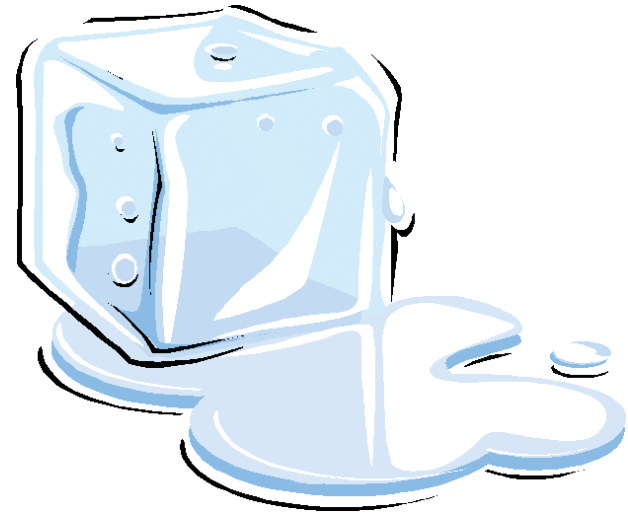


# The Ice Cube Trick

In a gentle and soothing voice, read this to the child:

*When you have an ice cube on your skin it can make that part of your body feel numb, so that you don't have any feeling there. (When your skin is numb it is much harder to feel any pain.)*

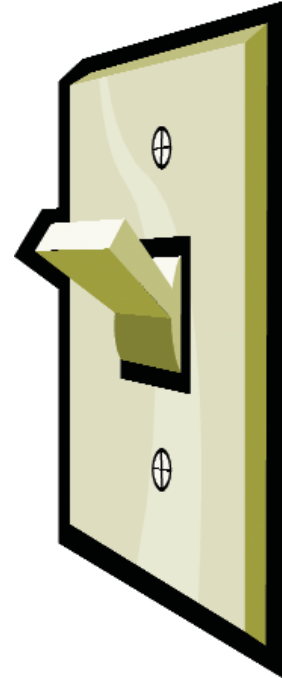
*Let your eyes close and imagine that an ice cube is resting on your (body part). As the ice cube lies there, imagine your (body part) getting colder and colder. It may start to feel tingly there as it becomes numb, so that you don't have any feeling there at all.*



# The Switch Trick

In a gentle and soothing voice, read this to the child:

*Imagine your brain has switches that you can use to turn off pain in any part of your body. Take a moment to find the switch that goes to your (body part). (Pause for child to find his/her switch). Now that you have found the switch to your (body part), turn it off. Your (body part) may feel tingly and heavy and numb as it becomes harder and harder to feel anything at all there.*

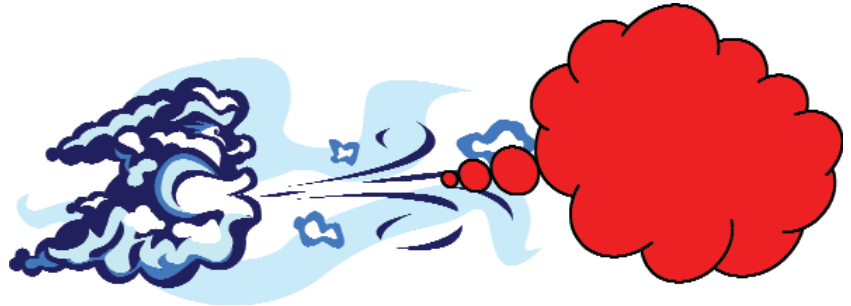


# The Red Cloud Trick

In a gentle and soothing voice, read this to the child:

*If you are using your other tricks and still have some hurt left, the red cloud trick can be especially helpful.*

*Take a very deep breath and gather up all your pain into one big, red cloud. Now, with all your strength, blow that red cloud out of you. Let's try this together. (Blow out the red cloud with the child). If you still feel some pain, gather what's left into another red cloud and blow it away until there is no more pain left inside of you.*



# The Story Trick

In a gentle and soothing voice, read this to the child:

*When you concentrate really hard on something, your brain can forget to pay attention to the pain. It will be exciting to notice that the more you focus on your story, the less you will be aware of pain. You may not even notice that you hurt at all!*

*Would you like to talk about a favorite story or make up your own story? Take a few moments to really concentrate on your story so that you can get a really clear picture about what is going on in the story. Pay attention to all the things that are happening in your story, like the sounds and sights, and the people and places that are part of your story. Once you have a really clear picture of your story, let me know what your story is all about.*

## **ATTENTION HELPERS:**

Adults can help the child with the story by asking some questions. Who is in the story? What are they doing? Where does the story take place? What happens next?

*(Remember to let the child lead, really listen, and **do not interrupt.**)*



# You can make up your own trick. . .

## one that works especially well for you.

## Can you think of what that might be?

Remember to practice your tricks, because the more you use them the better you get at making the pain go away. Just like a sport or a musical instrument, you get better at using these tricks by practicing a lot. Try practicing them every day, even when you are not scheduled for any sticks or procedures.

For more information on this Comfort Cart or other distraction techniques, call the Child Life Referral Line at x2060.