

COMFORT FIRST



THE COMFORT FIRST TEAM IS AVAILABLE TO ASSIST YOU AND YOUR CHILD WITH MEDICAL PROCEDURES ASSOCIATED WITH YOUR CHILD'S TREATMENT.

The aim of the Comfort First program is to promote coping skills and good procedural outcomes for children and families. Comfort First clinicians work in both the ward and Day Oncology areas.

We are located in the Children's Cancer Centre and can be contacted Monday-Friday from 9am to 6pm on pager #5808.

Families may contact clinicians directly to request assistance. We look forward to working with you.



Helping your CHILD with PROCEDURES

Being there whenever possible: having a parent or special person present will help your child feel more secure.

Being calm: a calm presence in the treatment room is reassuring for your child and can reduce anxiety.

Being honest: provide your child with simple, accurate information about the procedure.

Being positive: noticing small achievements such as sitting still or settling quickly after the procedure is finished can build your child's coping responses.

Being creative: think about what your child enjoys and find ways that you can use this in the treatment room.

Being curious: talking to your child after a procedure can provide useful information to aid in future treatments e.g. what was helpful/unhelpful?

Being an advocate: you may find techniques that work well for your child during procedures which could assist their treating team.



Preparing your CHILD for PROCEDURES

You can play an important role in preparing your child for procedures. Ask staff to explain what will happen so you can help your child or adolescent be prepared.

Consider the following questions when explaining medical equipment and procedures:

- **What is it?** (a stethoscope)
- **Where does it go?** (on your chest)
- **How does it feel?** (it may feel cold)
- **What is the purpose?** (so we can hear your heart beat)

Provide clear and honest information about the procedure at a language level appropriate to your child's abilities.

The timing of when you explain the procedure to your child will depend on their capacity and their degree of anxiety. For younger and/or more anxious children preparing them only the day prior or the day of the procedure may work best.

Children may vary in the amount of information they want to know about a procedure. Speak to your child and find out what and how much information they find helpful.

Positioning for COMFORT

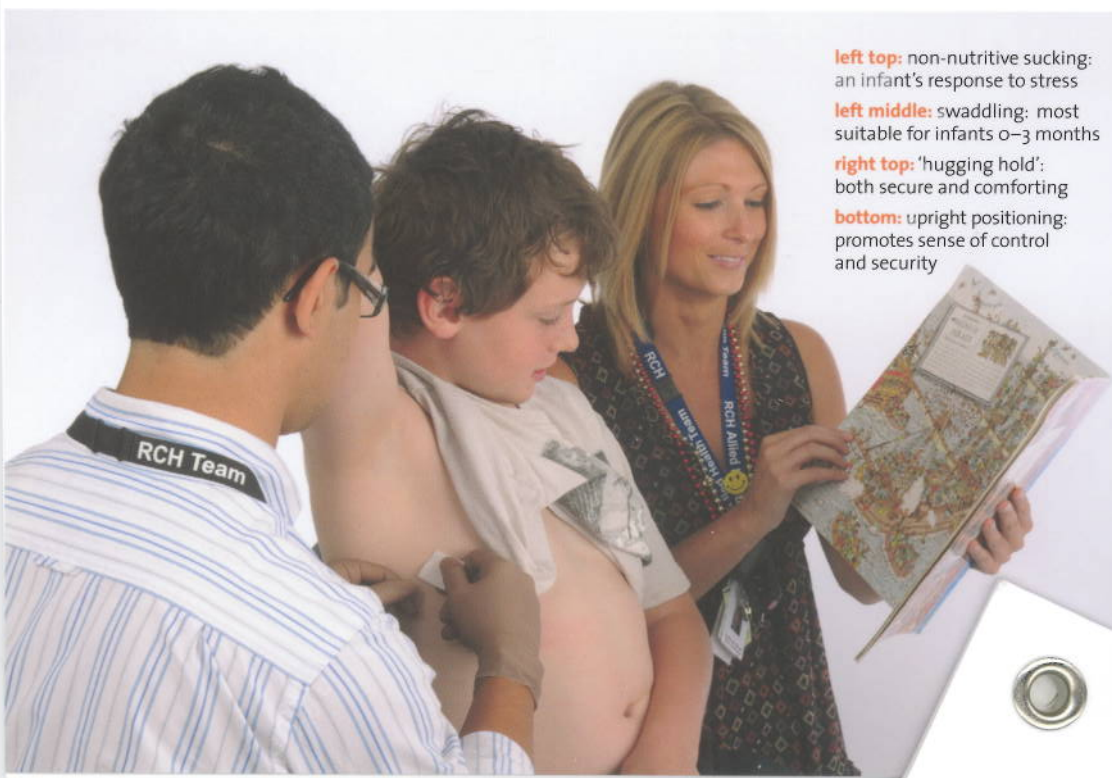
Positioning your child for comfort can provide a sense of support and security.

Allow time and space for your child to choose: sit up/lie down/sit on chair/sit on mum/dad's knee/have mum behind on the bed etc...

Be creative, but remember safety always comes first.

Increase comfort where possible for the child e.g. place pillow under arm.





left top: non-nutritive sucking:
an infant's response to stress

left middle: swaddling: most
suitable for infants 0–3 months

right top: 'hugging hold':
both secure and comforting

bottom: upright positioning:
promotes sense of control
and security

Promoting COPING:

TALKING + LISTENING tips

During a procedure it is helpful to act as your child's coach by encouraging them, using humour or telling a story that is unrelated to the procedure.

- **Strategy:** Empowering your child to explain their feelings

Instead of saying this...

"This is going to feel like a bee sting"

Try saying this...

"Tell me how it feels"

This will give your child or adolescent a chance to express their feelings and process what is going on for them.

- **Strategy:** Using humour

Instead of saying this...

"I'm sorry"

Try saying this...

"I heard a great joke the other day"

This is really effective in getting your child or adolescent to focus on something besides the procedure itself.

- **Strategy:** Caregiver as Coach

Instead of saying this...

"I promise you will be fine"

Try saying this...

"sometimes it helps me to breathe deeply when I feel nervous"

This is a useful way of being able to remind your child or adolescent of the skills they have which help them to cope.

- **Strategy:** Coping/distraction

Instead of saying this...

"Be a big boy or girl"

Try saying this...

"When I count to three, take a deep breath"

Promoting COPING:

DISTRACTION THERAPY

Distraction is one way of helping your child cope with painful or difficult procedures. It aids in providing a different focus from the procedure itself.

Babies

- sucrose (ask your nurse)
- dummy/breast feeding
- swaddling
- rattle/shaker

Toddlers

- comfort items: dummy, blanket, favorite toy
- singing/music
- blowing/popping bubbles
- sound/pop-up books

Pre-School & School Aged

- imaginary play
- non-procedural talk
- textured toys : squishy balls
- breathing/relaxation
- blowing/popping bubbles
- hand-held computer games
- I Spy/Where's Wally
- sound books

Adolescents

- non-procedural talk
- breathing/relaxation
- computer games DVD's/iPad
- conversation starters/quizzes

Please note: distraction therapy does not work for every child. Some children may prefer to watch the procedure and be involved in what is happening.



Guided IMAGERY

Guided Imagery is thinking in pictures, images and sensations and can be used to provide a safe, comfortable inner place to leave discomfort behind or to alter the experience of discomfort itself.

Help your child create an imagery experience by inviting them to imagine a favourite activity, place, story or person.

Encourage your child to engage in imagery by sensory questions: e.g. what they can see, hear, touch and smell? what are they doing? how do they feel?

Listen and engage with your child in their imagery rather than making suggestions. Allow the imagery to be your child's choice.

