



# IMPROVING THE VACCINATION EXPERIENCE:

A guide for health-care providers

In Canada, 1 in 4 adults report they are afraid of needles, and 1 in 10 report that concerns about needle pain influence their decision to get vaccinated.

The **CARD system (Comfort, Ask, Relax, Distract)** was developed to reduce stress during vaccination. It provides four categories of science-based activities that health-care providers and patients can **play to have a better vaccination experience**.

You can also review the [Improving the vaccination experience: Planning checklist for health-care providers](#) to see what you can do when setting up a vaccination site to improve the vaccination experience for patients. To learn more about CARD, go to [CardSystem.ca](http://CardSystem.ca).

## WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP PEOPLE PLAY THEIR CARDS?



### COMFORT

Find ways to get comfortable.

### COMFORT

Provide information about CARD to patients ahead of time so they know what to expect and how to cope. Create comfortable spaces for vaccination. Ensure seating is available for a support person



### ASK

Ask questions to be prepared.

### ASK

Encourage patients to ask questions so they are informed and prepared. People are anxious when they do not have enough information. Invite patients to play their CARDS during vaccination.

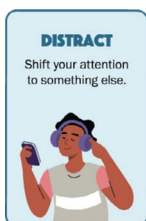


### RELAX

Keep yourself calm.

### RELAX

Stay calm and positive. Observe needles, minimize excessive noise and activity. Support the patient's coping preferences during vaccination.



### DISTRACT

Shift your attention to something else.

### DISTRACT

Offer physical and visual distraction items for those that want to be distracted. Some people do not want to be distracted. That's OK too.

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# VACCINATION DAY CHECKLIST

## EDUCATION OF PATIENTS AND CAREGIVERS

- Provide information about what will happen.
- Provide information about how to cope (i.e., CARD).

## ASSESSMENT OF PATIENTS

- Review patients' medical history, including level of needle fear and history of fainting. Vaccinate most fearful first. If a patient is prone to getting dizzy or fainting, suggest they squeeze their knees together or lie down.
- Review what CARDS (coping strategies) the patient wants to play and answer questions.
- Provide [topical anesthetics](#) for those who want it.

## DURING VACCINATION

- Provide privacy during vaccination.
- If multiple children and/or fearful individuals are being vaccinated in the same appointment, offer private vaccinations as fear can escalate if witnessing others getting vaccinated.
- Use [‘what to say’](#) resource for communication tips.
  - Foster a calm environment and be positive. Focus your attention on the patient and sit down near them. Sitting places the immunizer at eye level with the patient and this relaxes them. Do not appear rushed and avoid interruptions.
  - Do not use words that elicit fear and do not use repetitive reassurance or dismiss concerns.
  - Ask patients what CARDS they are playing and accommodate requests. Do not impose coping strategies such as looking away or taking a deep breath. These interventions are counter to the preferred coping strategies for many patients and lead to increased levels of fear or distress.
  - Provide balanced information. Do not say that vaccination will not hurt. Instead, describe sensations and duration, and invite patients to tell you how it felt.

- Use distraction resources (e.g., [CARD poster for kids](#), [CARD search and find poster](#)).
  - Provide distraction items (e.g., fidget toys) for patients who do not have their own but would like to be distracted (in keeping with infection control and prevention guidelines).
- Inject patients sitting upright.
- Use [‘comfort position’](#) resource for tips on positioning children. Avoid restraining children as this increases distress.
- Encourage patients to relax their arm and to keep it still during the injection.
- Consider not using alcohol to cleanse the skin as this step is unnecessary (World Health Organization; 2010), adds time and can increase distress.
- Ask patients which arm they want vaccinated. If there is no preference, inject the non-dominant arm.
- Inject the vaccine quickly, without prior aspiration. Do not press on or rub the injection site, as this increases pain.

## AFTER VACCINATION

- Assess stress-related symptoms, including fear, pain and dizziness. Suggest patients [squeeze their knees together](#) if they feel dizzy.
- Obtain feedback about experiences to inform future practice.
- Counsel patients regarding adverse reactions after vaccination and their management.
- End visit on a positive note. Consider providing rewards (e.g., sticker, photo, treat).

