

The fear of finger pricks injections *and*



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Introduction

Pre-school children have different perspectives on finger pricks and injections. Some don't worry about the finger pricks to test blood glucose but recoil at the thought of injections, others are fearful of both. Some others, perhaps the smallest group, accept them almost naturally.

Facing these fears and managing these necessary activities is not an easy task for either the children or their parents. They require learning new techniques and habits in our lives.

The educational material provided here doesn't pretend to discuss the techniques of injection. Rather, it provides some suggestions to help better manage the testing of blood glucoses and insulin injections with little children, fully recognizing that the fear they cause is very common for both children and their parents.





How to confront
the moment of testing
blood glucose or
injecting insulin

- In simple terms, explain to the child why insulin injections are necessary and important.



Example: "

Sweetheart, we all need to take medicine sometimes, and it isn't always pleasant, but they help keep us strong and healthy. They allow us to do all the things that we like to do, like playing with your friends Andrea and Peter! I must take something every day too, and I don't really like to do it, but I do it because it keeps me well. Help me count while I take my pill 1, 2, 3... see how fast it went?"

- Let them know that it is normal to be apprehensive or uncomfortable with injections.





I like to eat watermelon...

I love to jump in the water...



Example:

"I understand that you don't like it and that it makes you afraid. It is hard to do, but it's necessary to help us feel better and to be able to do all the things we want to do."

- Be honest about the pain and the fear. Don't try and tell the child that it's nothing and it won't hurt, it's important to validate their feelings and concerns about injections. It is important to tell the truth.



Example:

"Sweetheart, I know that it scares you and it probably bothers you a little. But, look at how I do it ... Oh, it bothers me a bit too, but now it's over."

- Your child ought to know exactly what's going to happen and why. This helps them anticipate and decrease the anxiety a needle produces. In addition, they will begin to familiarize themselves with diabetes supplies, learning to identify them even though they don't directly use them.



Example:

"Look Annie... here is the lancet device that we have used before. We are going to prick you on the finger and a little drop of blood will come out, we will put it on test strip in the machine that will tell us your blood glucose level. Then we will clean off your finger with cotton. Do you want to put the strip in the machine?" In this way, our children can see what is coming and little by little develop independence in their treatment, all in accord with their own individual characteristics and attitudes.

- It is imperative that parents learn to manage their own emotions, especially when giving injections or other treatments. Children can sense the parent's emotional state and that will influence how they perceive the situation. Try to be as calm as possible when administering treatments.



- Ensure that your verbal and nonverbal communication are consistent and positive when testing blood glucose and injecting insulin.



Example:

If we take a blood glucose and find that it is 40, parents' faces may show that they are scared, and this provokes fear in the child, even though they are assured that nothing will happen. They sense and likely know something is going on. It's better to explain to them why we are scared, and describe how the blood glucose can be raised. Avoid value judgements about blood glucose levels, they are neither good nor bad.

- Injections and taking blood glucose levels are not negotiable. If a child can convince themselves that they can change the timing of their doses or blood glucose tests, they might try and do it each time they must be done.

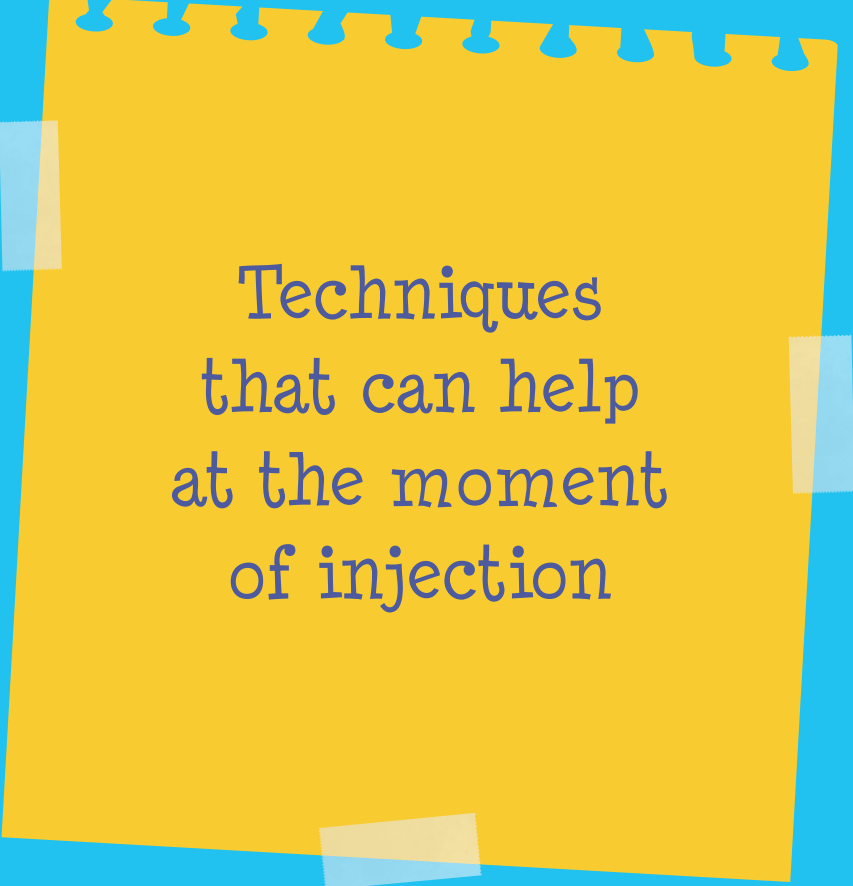


- Try to make the injections as normal as any other routine daily activity.

- Finally, after giving the injection, spend time with you child. Congratulate them and reenforce their good behavior, but don't make them feel badly if they fail to cooperate. When the child doesn't cooperate or resists, don't scold them.



All this can sometimes be frustrating and overwhelming for the parents, and equally for the child. Many times, it just hurts, and they don't want to do it. Remember, it is also something new in their lives too. Therefore, try and recognize and process the associated emotions, and work towards stimulating more positive behaviors the next time.



Techniques
that can help
at the moment
of injection

- Try to create a routine during treatment, that way children can build habits, and, at the same time, begin to accept them as part of everyday life. A consistent routine will help establish better control of your child's diabetes.



- As much as possible, try to provide treatment quickly and in a relaxed and calm atmosphere as possible.



- Try to engender a sense of responsibility in the child, while providing them opportunities to progressively increase their participation and independence.



Example:

Look together for the place where the last finger price was done and where to do the current one, identifying which places work for testing blood glucoses and those best for injections.

- Try and center the child's attention on something that interests them, making the moment more agreeable. There is no set recipe for how best to do this, since it requires knowing the little one, being attuned to what they like or dislike, and understanding what works best for them. One of the great challenges of being parents is trying to identify and understand each child's individual nature, needs, and responses.



Example:

Children feel more comfortable and secure with their favorite toys or doing something that they like to do. Using this idea, when it comes time to give the injection, have them play with their favorite rattle, sing their favorite song, or hug their favorite stuffed toy, etc.

It is important that any other caretakers also participate in these activities. So, if the child wants to sing, the mother or father or caretaker should sing with them and help create a more enjoyable moment.



- To make this advice more concrete, one of the best strategies surrounds the use of the child's toys or games. Children communicate and learn through play. For this reason, we suggest the selection of a toy. Have the child select a stuffed animal, a doll, a favorite action figure, along with a "I have diabetes" sticker which they can apply to their toy before the injection. This will help them transfer their worries to the toy, and, also, help alleviate the feeling that they are "unique".





Example:

On a stuffed animal you can mark the injections zones and have the child learn by playing with the toy when it's time for the injection. You can ask questions like, where will we give the shot today?. The teddy bear is afraid...how will we calm it down? What will you say? Will you sing them a song? This will help the reduce the child's anxiety and fears and, at the same time, help them begin to learn the location of injections sites and how to rotate them.



Rewards:

If a reward is given, it should NOT be material. After the injection, provide a special applause or hug, play with the child, or recognize them for a job well done to build their self-esteem and self-confidence. Generate quality moments where the child feels the support of their parents or caretakers.





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here are no set recipes or instructions to raise a child with diabetes. We understand how challenging it can be, and even more so given that you, as parents, are the ones that will be kept busy providing the care for your little love ones. We hope that the above advice will help you deal with the moments it comes time to perform finger pricks and injections. Children are different and sometimes don't respond in the same way to the advice we have given. With the caring, support, and understanding of family, but, most of all, in accord with the child's own learning styles and personalities, you will be able to overcome their fears associated with diabetes.

There are no better parents
for your child than you!



