

# IMPROVING THE VACCINATION EXPERIENCE: A GUIDE FOR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS



## THE CARD SYSTEM

The CARD system brings together everything we know about making vaccinations a more positive experience in a step-by-step process for healthcare providers to follow.

This factsheet explains how to plan and give vaccinations in a way that is patient-centred and promotes coping. It can also increase the likelihood your patients will complete recommended vaccination schedules, including COVID-19 vaccination.

Individuals with positive experiences will also be more likely to recommend vaccination to family members and others.

## GETTING STARTED

Provide your patients with their own CARD pamphlet for a more positive vaccination experience. Each letter category represents a different group of activities patients can play to have a better vaccination experience and reduce negative reactions. For more CARD tools visit <https://immunize.ca/card-adults>

### COMFORT **C**

**Comfort** strategies include providing educational materials so people know what to expect and interventions that encourage serenity and physical ease.

Immunizers can pick vaccination settings that are aesthetically appealing and with comfortable seating. Inform individuals to wear a short-sleeved or loose-fitting top that is easy to pull up during injection.

**C**

### ASK QUESTIONS **A**

**Asking questions** can help everyone to learn more about the vaccine and what to expect.

Many people are anxious because they do not have enough information. Invite people to ask questions and address their concerns.

Review vaccine communication and injection techniques to provide the best care possible.

**A**

### RELAX **R**

**Relax** strategies help keep people calm. Immunizers can provide private spaces for vaccination, reduce visual cues that elicit fear (such as needles) and minimize excessive noise and activity to promote calmness.

Individuals can use techniques such as deep breathing or positive self-talk ('I can do this').

**R**

### DISTRACT **D**

**Distract** strategies are used to take an individual's mind off the needle injection. Immunizers can ask individuals about their preferences.

For those that want to be distracted, they can recommend having a conversation with someone or using a cell phone.

**D**

SEE NEXT PAGE FOR A CHECKLIST THAT HELPS WITH INTEGRATING CARD INTO YOUR VACCINATION PLANNING.

# VACCINATING WITH CARD CHECKLIST

## VACCINATION PREPARATION AND PLANNING

### 1. Ensure adequate clinic space

- Esthetic room, free of hazards
- Temperature control
- Accommodates equipment and supplies
- Comfortable seating for patient with ability to lie down
- Allows for privacy
- Allows for no interruptions
- Allows for ability to accommodate a support person with seating

### 2. Educate patients and other stakeholders (e.g. parents/guardians, teachers)

- CARD education (e.g. discussion, tools)
- Answer patient questions
- Book vaccination appointment

### 3. Vaccination day reminders

- Patients ask questions they have about vaccination or coping interventions
- Patients plan how they will play their selected coping strategies (e.g. bring cell phone to use as a distraction item, wear short-sleeved shirt to allow for easy access to arm and to increase comfort)

## VACCINATION DAY

### 1. Vaccination clinic set-up

- Use separate areas for waiting, vaccination and post-vaccination with chairs
- Allow for privacy (e.g., use window coverings, physical barriers)
- Ensure safety measures are in place to prevent transmission of infectious diseases (e.g., sanitization items, face coverings)
- Make sure patients have comfortable seating and are able to be in a reclining position
- Allow patients to use distraction aids or comfort items
- Allow patients to bring a support person
- Arrange seating at clinic tables so that patients do not face each other or equipment, and obscure frightening equipment from site (e.g., use towel, table-top poster)

### 2. Vaccination administration

- Foster a calm environment and be positive
- Review patients' medical history, including fainting and level of fear or worry about vaccination
- Answer patients' questions
- Communicate using neutral language. Do not use words that elicit fear (e.g. the needle "stings") and do not use repetitive reassurance (i.e. don't worry, it's ok, you'll be fine)
- Provide balanced information. Do not suggest that vaccination will not hurt; instead, describe sensations (e.g. "pressure" and "pinch") and duration (e.g. "about 1 second") and invite patients to report on how they feel
- Ask patients about their preferences. Do not impose coping interventions such as verbal distraction, taking deep breaths, looking

away during injection (these interventions are counter to preferred coping strategies of many individuals and lead to increased levels of fear or distress)

- Ask patients what CARDS they are playing and accommodate requests (e.g. topical anesthetic, support person, private room, injection of two vaccines in same arm)
- Provide distraction agents for patients that do not have them but would like to be distracted (in keeping with infection control and prevention guidelines)
- Ask patients about their preference with respect to the arm to vaccinate. If there is no preference, inject the non-dominant arm
- Ask patients about their preference with respect to injecting two vaccines in the same arm
- Encourage patients to relax their arm so that it is loose and jiggle
- Consider not using alcohol to cleanse the skin as this step is unnecessary, adds time and can increase anticipatory stress
- Inject patients sitting upright (on a parent's/guardian's lap if patient is a young child)
- Inject vaccines quickly, without aspiration
- If there are multiple injections, administer the most painful vaccine last
- Monitor patient symptoms after vaccination. Suggest muscle tension to patients who are dizzy or prone to fainting (this can be achieved by squeezing legs together) or lying down in a reclining chair or on a gym mat
- Counsel patient regarding post-injection reactions and use of acetaminophen
- Document symptoms and feedback to inform future vaccination