

Addressing Vaccine Anxiety

Anxiety about injections is common for people of all ages, including adolescents and adults. Some feel so anxious that they dread, delay, or even avoid vaccination - even when they know vaccines are important. You can do simple things to make yourself (or the person you are with) feel better about the vaccination visit while being protected from serious diseases.

Before the Visit

Complete your check in prior to arriving, if possible, so your wait time is shorter.

Know what to expect. When setting up the visit, ask if vaccinations are expected. If you are a caregiver of an anxious person, do not reassure them falsely. For example, don't promise "no shots today" in case their healthcare provider recommends that they need one or more vaccinations.

During the Visit

Ask questions about the vaccination process so you feel prepared.

Tell the person vaccinating you what helps you feel better. Do you prefer sitting (most do) or lying down? Do you prefer to look away or to watch what is happening?

Relax. For example, taking a few slow deep breaths before, during, and after vaccination can be calming.

Distract. Most people prefer to be distracted during vaccination. Consider using an app or game on your mobile device or simply talking about something else.

For caregivers: Your words, tone, and attitude are important. The person getting the vaccine will be less anxious if you act calm, positive, and confident. Do not use fear-provoking words (like "shot" or "sting") or give false reassurances ("I promise it won't hurt a bit") as this may increase distress and pain.

After the Visit

You may use over the counter pain medicines (ibuprofen or tylenol) to help with pain or fever that develops after vaccination, if needed.