

Top Tips for Procedural Anxiety

1. While it may not be possible for the child or young person to have a choice about whether they have the procedure or not, it can help them to have some choice about how this happens.
2. As much as possible, give the young person choice about aspects such as where they sit, who is in the room, if they have cream or spray. This helps them to feel more in control of the situation.
3. Make a plan in collaboration with the young person beforehand which clearly states how they would like things to happen. Write this down, print it out and give it to the young person and those involved in their care.
4. Distraction works better than reassurance, instead of saying “it’ll be ok” or “don’t worry”, talk about something else that the young person is interested in.
5. Agree beforehand how the young person would like to be distracted – use the TV, a tablet, music, books, depending on the young person’s interests.
6. Try and encourage the young person to practice relaxation and deep breathing techniques at home and then remind the young person to take deep breaths during the procedure.
7. Acknowledge the young person’s feelings; say “I know this is hard” “I know you don’t want to have this done”.
8. Agree beforehand who is going to talk to the young person. It is best if this is only one person as otherwise it becomes overwhelming.
9. If a young person is anxious, make sure they don’t have to wait. It is best that they are seen as soon as they arrive and by someone that they know and trust.
10. If a child becomes distressed, decide if they can take a break or come back another day.
11. Use rewards appropriate for the child’s age.

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