



PEDIATRIC ANXIETY RESOURCE GUIDE

HELPING CHILDREN FEEL PREPARED, SUPPORTED, AND MORE
COMFORTABLE DURING MEDICAL PROCEDURES

A FREE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

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UNDERSTANDING ANXIETY

WHY MIGHT MY CHILD FEEL ANXIOUS?

- UNFAMILIAR ENVIRONMENT: HOSPITALS, EQUIPMENT, AND NEW PEOPLE CAN FEEL OVERWHELMING
- UNCERTAINTY: NOT KNOWING WHAT WILL HAPPEN CAN CREATE STRESS
- FEAR OF PROCEDURES: MAY BE NERVOUS ABOUT DISCOMFORT, NEEDLES, OR UNFAMILIAR PROCEDURES
- PREVIOUS EXPERIENCES: A STRESSFUL PAST MEDICAL EXPERIENCE MAY AFFECT HOW A CHILD FEELS ABOUT FUTURE VISITS

WHAT MIGHT ANXIETY LOOK LIKE?

- EMOTIONAL: WORRY, FEAR, FRUSTRATION, OR FEELING OVERWHELMED
- BEHAVIORAL: CRYING, WITHDRAWING, AVOIDING, OR REPEATEDLY ASKING QUESTIONS
- PHYSICAL: STOMACHACHES, HEADACHES, SWEATING, SHAKING, OR A FASTER HEARTBEAT



HOW CAN ANXIETY AFFECT MY CHILD?

- COMMUNICATION: MAY HAVE DIFFICULTY EXPRESSING THEIR CONCERNS/ASKING QUESTIONS
- EMOTIONS: MAY BECOME WORRIED, FRUSTRATED, IRRITABLE, UPSET
- COOPERATION: MAY HAVE DIFFICULTY PARTICIPATING IN THEIR CARE
- DAILY LIFE: MAY AFFECT SLEEP, CONCENTRATION, MOOD, APPETITE

WHY DOES PREPARATION MATTER?

- UNFAMILIAR EXPERIENCES CAN BECOME EASIER TO UNDERSTAND
- ENCOURAGING QUESTIONS GIVES CHILDREN AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS CONCERNS
- A SUPPORTIVE PARENT OR CAREGIVER CAN HELP CHILDREN FEEL SAFE AND HEARD
- BREATHING, DISTRACTION, AND RELAXATION TECHNIQUES CAN HELP CHILDREN MANAGE STRESS

KEY TAKEAWAY

CHILDREN EXPRESS ANXIETY DIFFERENTLY. TRY TO UNDERSTAND WHAT YOUR CHILD IS COMMUNICATING RATHER THAN ASSUMING THEY ARE SIMPLY "BEING DIFFICULT."



5 WAYS PARENTS CAN HELP

WAYS TO HELP YOUR CHILD FEEL PREPARED- BEFORE THE PROCEDURE!

01

TALK ABOUT THE VISIT

GIVE YOUR CHILD A SIMPLE OVERVIEW OF WHERE THEY'RE GOING AND WHY.



02

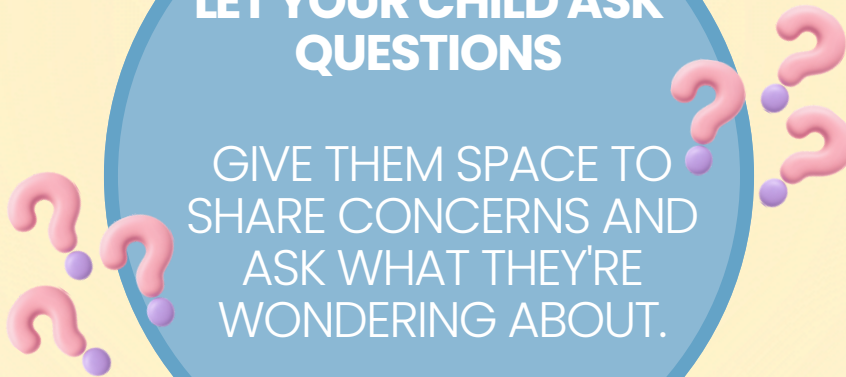
USE AGE-APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE

EXPLAIN THINGS IN A WAY YOUR CHILD CAN UNDERSTAND WITHOUT OVERWHELMING THEM.

03

LET YOUR CHILD ASK QUESTIONS

GIVE THEM SPACE TO SHARE CONCERNS AND ASK WHAT THEY'RE WONDERING ABOUT.



04

PACK FAMILIAR COMFORTS

BRING A FAVORITE TOY, BLANKET, BOOK, HEADPHONES, OR OTHER COMFORTING ITEM.



05

PLAN FOR THE DAY

BRING SNACKS IF ALLOWED, ACTIVITIES FOR WAITING, AND ANYTHING YOUR CHILD MAY NEED.



5 WAYS YOUR CHILD CAN COPE

SIMPLE STRATEGIES TO TRY BEFORE AND DURING A MEDICAL PROCEDURE.

BREATHE

PRACTICE SLOW,
CONTROLLED
BREATHING TO HELP
MANAGE STRESS



DISTRACT

USE MUSIC, GAMES,
BOOKS, VIDEOS, OR
CONVERSATION



FIND COMFORT

HOLD A COMFORT
ITEM OR STAY CLOSE
TO A TRUSTED ADULT



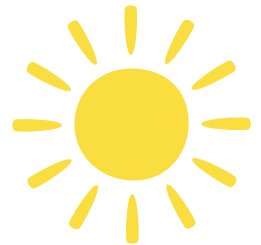
EXPRESS YOURSELF

TALK, DRAW, ASK
QUESTIONS, OR TELL
AN ADULT HOW
YOU'RE FEELING



VISUALIZE

IMAGINE A FAVORITE
PLACE OR CALMING
ACTIVITY



Trying a coping strategy at home can make it easier for your child to use during a stressful medical visit.

DISCLAIMER: ASK YOUR PHYSICIAN/HEALTHCARE TEAM WHICH PREPERATION/COPING STRATEGIES WOULD BE APPROPRIATE FOR YOUR CHILD'S PROCEDURE

BEFORE THE HOSPITAL VISIT

USE THIS CHECKLIST TO HELP YOUR FAMILY FEEL READY:

WHAT TO BRING AND CONFIRM

- 
- 
- ☐ COMFORT ITEM _____
 - ☐ FAVORITE BOOK, GAME, OR ACTIVITY _____
 - ☐ HEADPHONES OR MUSIC _____
 - ☐ QUESTIONS FOR THE HEALTHCARE TEAM _____
 - ☐ REQUIRED MEDICAL INFORMATION OR DOCUMENTS _____
 - ☐ APPOINTMENT DATE, TIME, LOCATION, AND CHECK-IN _____

QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK THE HEALTHCARE TEAM

"WHAT SHOULD MY CHILD EXPECT?"

"HOW CAN I HELP THEM PREPARE?"

"WHAT CAN WE DO IF MY CHILD BECOMES ANXIOUS?"

"WHAT COMFORT STRATEGIES ARE AVAILABLE?"

"WHAT RESOURCES CAN WE USE TO PREPARE AT HOME?"

RESOURCES GUIDE



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS HEALTH (AAP)
VISIT: [HEALTHYCHILDREN.ORG](https://www.healthychildren.org)

PARENT-FRIENDLY INFORMATION ON CHILDREN'S HEALTH, DEVELOPMENT, AND EMOTIONAL WELLNESS

SCAN TO VISIT!



UPMC CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL OF PITTSBURGH
VISIT: [CHP.EDU/OUR-SERVICES/CHILD-LIFE](https://chp.edu/our-services/child-life)

INFORMATION TO HELP FAMILIES PREPARE FOR A CHILD'S VISIT, INCLUDING WHAT TO EXPECT, FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES, AND HEALTH EDUCATION RESOURCES.

SCAN TO VISIT!



ASSOCIATION OF CHILD LIFE PROFESSIONALS (ACLP)
VISIT: [CHILDLIFE.ORG](https://www.childlife.org)

LEARN ABOUT CHILD LIFE SPECIALISTS AND HOW THEY SUPPORT CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN COPING WITH HEALTHCARE EXPERIENCES.

SCAN TO VISIT!



UCLA HEALTH — CHILD LIFE

VISIT: [UCLAHEALTH.ORG/MEDICAL-SERVICES/CHILD-LIFE/PREPARING-YOUR-CHILDS-HOSPITAL-STAY](https://uclahealth.org/medical-services/child-life/preparing-your-childs-hospital-stay)

AGE-SPECIFIC PREPARATION TIPS AND GUIDANCE TO HELP PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS SUPPORT THEIR CHILD BEFORE A HOSPITAL VISIT.

SCAN TO VISIT!



CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL OF PHILADELPHIA (CHOP)

VISIT: [CHOP.EDU/HEALTH-RESOURCES/PREPARING-HOSPITALIZATION-AND-MEDICAL-PROCEDURES](https://chop.edu/health-resources/preparing-hospitalization-and-medical-procedures)

PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR PARENTS ON PREPARING CHILDREN FOR PROCEDURES, AGE-APPROPRIATE COMMUNICATION, COPING, AND CHILD LIFE SUPPORT.

SCAN TO VISIT!



ABOUT THE GUIDE + SOURCES

MEDICAL PROCEDURES CAN BE UNFAMILIAR AND STRESSFUL FOR CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES. THIS GUIDE WAS CREATED TO HELP GIVE PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF PEDIATRIC MEDICAL ANXIETY AND FIND PRACTICAL WAYS TO SUPPORT THEIR CHILD BEFORE AND DURING PROCEDURES.

THE GUIDE PROVIDES INFORMATION ON RECOGNIZING SIGNS OF ANXIETY, UNDERSTANDING THE AFFECTS OF ANXIETY ON A CHILD, PREPARING FOR A HOSPITAL VISIT, USING COPING STRATEGIES, AND FINDING ADDITIONAL RESOURCES. INFORMATION WAS COMPILED FROM RELIABLE HEALTHCARE SOURCES AND RESEARCH TO PROVIDE FAMILIES WITH ACCESSIBLE, PRACTICAL, AND GUIDANCE BASED ON EVIDENCE.

DISCLAIMER: THIS GUIDE IS FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY AND IS NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR PROFESSIONAL MEDICAL ADVICE; TALK TO YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER FOR PERSONALIZED GUIDANCE ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S ANXIETY, HEALTH, AND MEDICAL HISTORY.

SOURCES



[HTTPS://PMC.NCBI.NLM.NIH.GOV/ARTICLES/PMC4857227/](https://PMC.NCBI.NLM.NIH.GOV/ARTICLES/PMC4857227/)

[HTTPS://PMC.NCBI.NLM.NIH.GOV/ARTICLES/PMC9971331/](https://PMC.NCBI.NLM.NIH.GOV/ARTICLES/PMC9971331/)