

# **Non-pharmacological pain management**

**Royal Children's Hospital  
Melbourne Australia**



# Painful procedures

During painful procedures children can exhibit:

- stress
- fear
- anxiety

# Result of stress, fear and anxiety

- Abnormal pain behaviours
- Post-traumatic stress disorder in severe cases
- Enormous implications for the child, family and all hospital staff involved with these children on subsequent encounters

# Non-pharmacological interventions

- Can be used with or without pharmacological support
- Variety of techniques
- Effective as coping strategies
- Help make pain more tolerable

# For optimal efficacy

Non-pharmacological interventions need:

- to be taught to parents and children
- to be taught to health professionals

Experience for advanced interventions is necessary for:

- guided imagery
- hypnosis

# Goals of non-pharmacological interventions

- To minimise fear and distress
- To make pain more tolerable
- To give the child a sense of control over the situation and their behaviour
- To teach and enhance coping strategies for the child
- To instruct parents in techniques to assist their child

# Outcomes of successful non-pharmacological strategies

- To have a cooperative, calm, non-traumatised child
- To complete medical procedures successfully in a timely manner
- To have subsequent procedures performed with reduced fear and anxiety

# Indications

- The medical procedure should not be complex or prolonged
- The child needs to be willing to participate
- Pharmacological strategies should be considered as well

# Contraindications

- Non-pharmacological techniques should **NOT** be attempted during painful procedures without prior instruction and co-operation
  - Surgical procedures
  - Complex and/or long procedures
  - Distressed, un-cooperative child

# Non-pharmacological techniques everyone can implement



- Information: explain, explain, explain...
- Parents' presence
- Choices and control
- Laughter and fun
- Deep breathing
- Heat / Cold

# Diversion



- Choices and control
- Diversion / distraction
- Play / relaxation
- Videos / DVDs / computer games

# Controlled breathing

- Bubbles
- Breathing
- Blowing



# Comforting touch

- Cuddles
- Stroking
- Massage
- Holding
- Rocking

# Imagination

- Story telling / books
- Guided imagery
- Favourite activity
- Magic



# Give information




- Explain at a level:
  - the child can understand
  - the child wants to know
  - involve the parents

# Relaxation

- Deep breathing
- Relaxing from head to toe
- Music

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- RCH pain management info:  
<http://www.rch.org.au/anaes/pain/>



**Pain control must be based on scientific fact, not on personal beliefs or opinions**

Finally...

Optimal pain management  
is the right of **all** patients  
and the responsibility of **all**  
health professionals