Being Kind to Kids; a guide to facilitating painful or distressing procedures in children

Preparing and positioning infants and children for procedures

By using the following techniques, infants, children and their carers can be safely and comfortably managed throughout a painful or distressing procedure. Anxiety and distress can be minimised and comfort promoted.

Infant Positioning

Promote comfort and a sense of safety by:
- Wrapping/swaddling
- Offer a breast feed or non-nutritive sucking with dummy/pacifier
- Consider sucrose orally, 2 minutes before painful procedures and throughout if necessary
- Use of topical anaesthetic cream
- Use of distraction with songs, nursery rhymes, bubbles or a toy

Older Infants/Toddlers

Promote safety and comfort by using a controlled hug approach, avoiding negative restraining
- Sit upright on a carer’s lap facing towards or away from parent/carer
- Use of topical anaesthetic cream
- Use a hugging hold rather than restraint
- Use ‘One Voice’ approach
- Utilise a Child Life Therapist if possible/use of active distraction
- Positive validation
- If extremely distressed consider use of analgesia and/or sedation.

Remember to leave a child safe and settled after any painful or distressing procedure.
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Children

Preparation and explanation are extremely important for this age group. Allowing them a choice where possible, use of positive language and validation where appropriate can help to facilitate a painful or distressing procedure.

- Offer explanations and choices if possible
- Use of topical anaesthetic cream
- Distraction/Child Life Therapy
- Sitting upright in a hug hold
- Offer child to look away
- Use ‘One Voice’ approach
- Use of iPad, books, bubbles, toys, TV/DVD
- Deep breathing exercises as a coping strategy
- Guided imagery
- If extremely distressed consider use of analgesia and/or sedation
- Lie in a safe and comfortable position when necessary, ie LP

Teenagers

- Establish rapport/ trust
- Give choices where appropriate
- Use of topical anaesthetic cream
- Maintain privacy
- Use of iPhones/ tablets/ own music

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References

- RCH Melbourne factsheet; Infant positioning, promoting comfort, 2013
- CHW Pain Management Guidelines

Thank you to Fairfield RSL for sponsoring the ‘Being Kind to Kids’ project.