



**CALM
CARE**

A guide for parents and carers

At Children's Health Queensland, we want every child to feel confident, comfortable and positive about their hospital and healthcare experiences.

We know that some medical procedures – such as blood tests, vaccinations and the insertion of intravenous (or 'IV') cannulas – can be a source of fear and anxiety for some children. That's why we've created the CALM promise, a person-centred approach to help guide the way we work with children and young people to minimise distress and discomfort during medical procedures.

The CALM promise

CALM stands for **Comfort, Analgesia, Language, Mindfulness and Memory** – the five elements we will use with every child to provide the best possible procedural care experience.

Comfort

We will work with children and families to ensure they feel as comfortable as possible.

Analgesia

We will always offer analgesia (pain relief) when there is potential for pain.

Language

We will use words that promote calm and confidence.

Mindfulness and Memory

We will use age-appropriate distraction and relaxation techniques to reduce fear, distress and pain. We help children and families focus on the positive aspects of their procedure to help them achieve even more success next time.

Why is CALM care important?

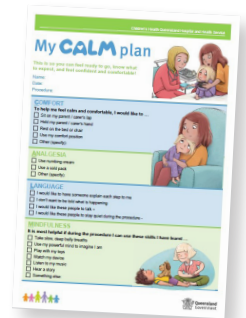
Empowering children to feel confident and calm about having a procedure not only benefits their health and wellbeing today but also into their future. A good experience at an appointment can build resilience and confidence and reduce the chance of developing a fear of medical procedures and clinical environments.

The importance of having a plan

We all do better when we know what to expect. Having a CALM plan for a procedure can help reassure your child and empower them with some choice over the situation (which they may not be looking forward to). Give your child as many choices as possible (e.g. what toy to bring from home, what song they would like to sing, whether to sit on your lap or hold your hand, which arm to have the injection in etc.)

This empowers your child with some control over the experience. You can also let them choose a treat or a special activity to do afterwards to make sure the experience ends on a positive note.

Ask about our CALM Plan which you can complete with your child before their appointment.



What can you do?

Children look to their parents and carers to decide whether or not they should be worried. One of the biggest predictors of how a child will manage a procedure is their parent or carers own level of stress. Stress is contagious, but fortunately so is CALM!

The way you communicate with your child about the procedure is important, too. Use language to frame the experience in a positive way so your child will have an expectation of success. Let your child know there are plenty of ways to feel comfortable when they're having a procedure and you can work on your plan together. Your actions and language will help your child feel safe and in control.



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How you can help us provide CALM CARE

Comfort

Planning and finding a calming and reassuring position will help your child feel comfortable, confident and ready to safely have their procedure. Ask your child's team about what positions are possible (this will depend on the procedure) to help your child feel calm and comforted. These may include holding your child's hand, holding them on your lap or sitting beside you with your arm around them.

Analgesia (pain relief)

The potential pain associated with injections and procedures (even if only brief) is a common cause of anxiety and fear in children. The following pain-relief options can help make the experience easier:

- Topical local anaesthetics are creams that are applied to the skin to numb the area before the procedure. It's important to apply the cream in the right spot, so check with staff beforehand.
- Cold packs.
- Buzzy Bee (uses vibration and cold to help block pain and distract).
- Breastfeeding or feeding sucrose solution to babies improves comfort during procedures.

Language

The words you use when talking about your child's procedure can make a difference.

Negative or 'scary' language can set up an expectation of a negative experience. Instead of using words like 'a little sting' or 'it will only hurt for a second' try saying: "Everyone feels things differently – some kids don't feel much at all and are surprised how easy it is."

Avoid saying things like: 'Don't worry, just relax' or 'You're so brave!'. This can make a child think there is a reason to be brave or worried.

Talk positively about the procedure and medical care. Emphasise the importance of a procedure to stay healthy, get well or help the medical team take care of them.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is about relaxing the body and mind to reduce stress and feel calm. When you focus your attention on something, someone or somewhere else, it can distract from a procedure.

- **Deep breathing:** Ask your child to take deep, slow belly breaths in and out (breathe with them to keep them on track). If you can, practice this with your child beforehand.
- **Guided imagery:** This technique is all about imagining you're somewhere else – it can be somewhere peaceful, fun, adventurous – whatever your child chooses.
- **Distraction:** Having something to watch or do can change the way we feel pain. Your child can choose to watch a video, sing a song, hear a joke, hug a favourite toy – anything that interests them and shifts their focus!

Knowing what works best to distract and calm your child ahead of time will allow you to practice this and make it part of your child's CALM plan.

Memory

We know that Memory is not a tape recorder!

You can help shape your child's memory of their procedure by reinforcing the positive parts of a procedure afterwards.

Focusing on the positive and successful aspects and praising accomplishments, even if they seem minor, can build the foundation to be able to achieve even more next time.

We know that how a caregiver reminisces about an event can impact the way a child develops their memory of an event. Talking about the procedure in a positive way results in positive memory making. Negative talk about the procedure can result in negative memory development.

