

PREPARING YOUR BABY FOR MEDICAL VISITS



Dear Parents and Caregivers,

Going to new places can be hard for babies, especially the doctor's office. Even though checkups and medical visits help keep your baby healthy, they can be hard for you both. This can be even harder if your baby has a medical condition. These visits can change your daily routine and feel overwhelming (like it is too much or too stressful).

Babies grow fast, and doctor visits are a great time to check how your baby is doing and ask questions. You may wonder things like:

- "Is my baby growing okay?"
- "When can I start solid foods?"
- "Should my baby be babbling yet?"
- "When will my baby sleep through the night?"
- "Will my baby need more treatment?"
- "How do I get my baby to take their medicine every day?"
- "Will this condition impact how my baby develops?"

It's normal to have a lot of questions. That can make doctor visits feel stressful. Know that you're not alone. The **Early Connections team** has some tips to help you and your baby feel calmer at medical visits. You're doing a great job!



How Can You Prepare Yourself?

- **Plan ahead.** Think about how the visit may change your baby's day. Will it affect nap or feeding times? Try to shift your schedule if you need to.
- **Bring extras.** Bring extra diapers, bottles, wipes, and other items you may need just in case the visit takes longer than you expect. Don't forget a snack for yourself!
- **Know what to expect.** Find out what kind of visit it is. Will your baby get shots or other treatments? Knowing what to expect helps you prepare.
- **Write down questions.** Make a list or voice note of things you want to ask the doctor. Make sure to add questions from other family members too.
- **Check your feelings.** If you feel nervous, take deep breaths to feel more calm. Your baby can sense your emotions. When you feel more calm, they feel safer.

How Can You Prepare Your Child?

- **Bring comfort items.** Bring your baby's favorite blanket, toy, or pacifier.
- **Talk about the visit ahead of time.** Use simple words and images to narrate (explain) what's going on. "We're getting dressed to go to the doctor. We can stop to look at the fish when we're done."



How Can You Help Your Baby After the Medical Visit?

- Try not to have lots of activities on days when you have a visit. This will let you spend time reconnecting with your baby. Talk, cuddle, or play in ways that make you both happy.

How Can You Help Your Baby in Emergency Medical Visits?

Sometimes, you don't have time to prepare. You can still use many of these tips. Take care of yourself and connect with your baby to help them feel safe.

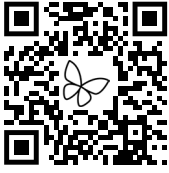
- **Stay calm.** Take slow, deep breaths to help you focus.
- **Use self-talk.** Tell yourself: "I'm doing my best to help my baby feel safe."
- **Describe what is going on.** Use words to describe what is happening to their body.
- **Talk about your feelings and needs to a friend or family member you trust.** It's okay to need and ask for support.

How Can You Help Your Baby During the Medical Visit?

- **Talk or sing to your baby in a soft voice.** Tell them what is going on. They may not understand the words, but your voice will help them feel safe.
- **Narrate the scene.** Describe the room and what's going on.
 - For example: "We're at the doctor's office. There are other babies here. It's a little cold, but Daddy has your blanket."
- **Feed your baby before** or after the exam (if you can). Babies feel more calm if they are close to you during feeding.
- **Hold or touch your baby** during the visit. Use your voice and gentle touch to comfort them.
- **Offer support.** Let your baby know you're there.
 - Say things like: "You didn't like it when the doctor looked in your ears. That's okay. He's just checking to make sure you're healthy. I'm here."
- **Soothe and connect.** It is normal if your baby cries. Take deep breaths to help you both feel better. Once your baby is calm, take a moment to connect through gentle touch, a shared smile, or playful movement.
- **If your baby needs a shot,** watch these videos from the Meg Foundation about how to reduce crying and pain: [Resources for Babies & Toddlers \(0-2\)](#)
- **Don't hold your baby down,** but try these comfort positions: [Comfort Positioning Guide](#)
- **Ask questions.** If you're not sure about anything, make sure to ask questions. It's important to leave understanding your baby's needs and a plan for future visits.



Where can I find online resources for more support?



Tips from the Meg Foundation

Comfort for Babies Infographic

<https://www.megfoundationforpain.org/creating-comfort-for-babies-infographic/>



Comfort Positioning Poster

<https://www.megfoundationforpain.org/comfort-positioning-poster/>



Resources for Babies/Toddler 0-2

<https://www.megfoundationforpain.org/resources-for-babies-toddlers-0-2/>



How to Prepare Your Baby For Doctor's Visits – Challenges and Tips

Source: *Being The Parent*

<https://www.beingtheparent.com/how-to-prepare-your-baby-for-doctors-visits-challenges-and-tips/>

When Should You Ask for Extra Help?

Most babies feel better soon after a doctor's visit. But some babies who need a lot of medical care may get very upset and have a harder time calming down.

Talk to Your Care Team if:

- Your baby's stress makes it hard to get medical treatment
- You feel very worried and it begins to affect your daily life

There are experts who can help (such as child life specialists, social workers, infant mental health experts, and pediatric psychologists). They can help make things easier for you and your baby. Ask your care team about a referral for more help.



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Scan the QR code on the left for more resources from CHLA experts.