Health care procedures, especially when we use a needle, can be stressful for children and teens. Giving children ways to cope can help them:

- Have a sense of control.
- Be a part of their own care.
- Cope with future health care events.
- Have a better overall experience.

Things we can do to help children with needle procedures:

**Numbing the skin**
- We have special medications we can put on your child's skin to help them not feel the needle poke as much.

**Sucrose**
- We have sucrose (sugar water) that acts as a pain reliever for babies who are 12 months or younger.
- Sucrose should be given 1-2 minutes before a procedure and continue throughout the procedure. Sucrose can be given on a pacifier, in a syringe, or on a finger.

**Breastfeeding**
- We encourage you to breastfeed during the needle stick because research shows it helps your baby feel less pain.
- Breastfeeding needs to begin 2-5 minutes before a procedure. If your child unlatches, gently reposition when your child is ready and continue throughout the procedure.

**Comfort Positioning**
- We know letting kids sit upright helps provide them with comfort and a sense of control. We would like you or another caregiver (such as a nurse or Child Life specialist) to hold your child in your lap in a secure and comforting position during the procedure. This provides an opportunity for you as the parent to comfort them while also helping them to remain still and safe during their procedure.
- Babies can be swaddled and held.

**Distraction**
- Distract your child by helping them focus on something fun. Common choices include books, music, rattles, hand-held toys, phones, tablets and toys that make noise.
- Playing counting games or games such as I Spy or singing are also fun and do not require supplies.
- Taking deep breaths can also help the body relax and may make the procedure seem easier.
- If you need distraction items during your clinic or lab visit, you can go to the Kreamer Resource Center for Families and check out a distraction kit. Child Life specialists are also available to provide information, distraction and support. Please ask your nurse or other staff member to contact Child Life to help support you and your child during needle procedures.

**Other Recommendations**
- It's important in the few days leading up to your child's needle procedure that you are honest about what will happen. We do not recommend surprising kids with a vaccination or other needle procedure. In the long run, this can make anxiety about needle procedures much worse!
- Being honest gives you and your child time to prepare, plan and recover.
- Before and during the procedure, interact normally without focusing on the pain. Instead, make plans for how your child will sit most comfortably and what sounds or objects might distract them best.

For more on our Comfort Promise, visit childrensmercy.org/comfortpromise.
Numbing Cream (4% Lidocaine)
Over the Counter for Needle Procedures

What is it: Lidocaine cream is a numbing cream that can be applied to your child’s skin and is available without a prescription.

Where/how to apply:
- The Lidocaine cream can be placed on more than one spot.
- Talk with staff about the best locations to apply the Lidocaine cream. Do not apply it to skin that is cut, scraped, red, swollen or sore.
- In a thick layer, put a quarter to half dollar size blob of cream on the site. Do not rub in.
- Cover with a dressing (Tegaderm or plastic wrap) and leave on until just before the procedure.

When to use: Lidocaine cream must be applied 30-60 minutes before needle procedures.

Learn more about the Comfort Promise:

- Aspercreme 4% Lidocaine
  - 2.7 oz. ($6.50-10)
  - 4.7 oz. ($10-13)

- CMH Outpatient Pharmacy 4% Lidocaine
  - 0.52 oz. ($16)

- Goldbond 4% Lidocaine Cream
  - 1.75 oz. ($7-11)

- Walmart Brand (Equate):
  - 2.7 oz. max strength ($4.98)
  - 4 oz. ultra strength ($3.84)