

Non-Drug Options for Pain Management in Children

Pain is complex. There are many non-drug options that you can use to manage pain and help decrease your child's anxiety. These techniques can also become coping skills that your child can use in future life experiences:

Play, Distraction & Virtual Reality

Keeping your child's mind focused on something else can help to reduce their awareness of pain. Useful distractions can be things like interactive toys, blowing bubbles, singing, light-up toys, music, storytelling, video games, virtual reality goggles, tablets, computers, and TV.

Music

Music may be very comforting when your child is experiencing pain or discomfort. Listening to music, singing, playing or learning an instrument, and writing songs can also help lessen pain and anxiety.

Art & Journaling

Artmaking uses your child's creativity as a healing source and can be a tool for positive coping and a distraction from pain. Journaling, drawing, collaging, and painting can help kids and teens better understand themselves and communicate their feelings.

Change the Environment

Lowering lights, reducing noise and limiting visitors may help some children. Aromatherapy, soft music, and favorite blankets or stuffed animals are also comforting.

Breathing Techniques

Practicing calm breathing can help to relax muscles that are tensed because of pain or anxiety.

- Have your child try belly breathing by placing one hand on their belly and one hand on their chest. As they take a deep breath in they should see their hand raise with their belly and the hand on their chest stay still.
- Or try 4-7-8 breathing: Start by breathing in for a count of 4, hold that breath in for a count of 7, and then exhale that breath for a count of 8.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

This is when your child tightens or tenses specific muscle groups as they breathe in and then relax them as they breathe out. For example, your child can squeeze their hands tightly as they inhale and let them go as they exhale. You can look online for audio recordings to help.

Guided Imagery

Your child can use their imagination to go to a place that makes them feel calm, happy, relaxed, and comfortable. Have your child close their eyes, practice calm breathing, and choose a place to imagine. Ask them to paint a picture in their mind and describe all the sights, sounds, and smells in vivid detail. It could be a beach, forest, baseball field, or even grandma's house. You can also look online for guided imagery scripts for pain relief.

Tactile Methods

Some children are comforted by calm, gentle touch or massaging. Other children prefer to be held tightly to feel safe and secure. Babies are often soothed by slowly stroking their forehead. You can also ask your doctor when to use cold or warm compresses to help with pain.

Choices

Offering choices, of those listed above, can help to give kids a sense of control to help with their discomfort or pain.

Comfort Menu:

Activities:

Bubbles
Video games
Toys
Computer
Movies / TV
Reading

Art:

Coloring / drawing
Painting
Play-doh / clay
Collages
Expressive journaling

Relaxation:

Music
Relaxation apps
Guided imagery
Stress balls
Breathing techniques
Guided meditation

Books/Journals

- *Don't Feed The WorryBug*: by Andi Green
- *The Very Frustrated Monster*: by Andi Green
- *The Monster Who Couldn't Decide*: by Andi Green
- *The Lonely Little Monster*: by Andi Green
- *Imagine a Rainbow: A Child's Guide for Soothing Pain*: by Brenda Miles, PhD
- *Breathe Like a Bear; 30 Mindful Moments for Kids to Feel Calm and Focused Anytime, Anywhere*: by Kira Willey
- *Digging Deep: A Journal for Young People Facing Health Challenges*: by Rose Offner
- *Chill and Spill: A Place to Put It Down and Work It Out*: by Steffanie Lorig and Jeanean Jacobs

Phone Apps:

Breathe2Relax
Bellybio
Calm

Simply being
Smiling mind
Deep Relaxation

Fluidity
Pocket Pond
Bubbles

Headspace
Colorfly
Paced breathing