



## Play your CARDS to improve the COVID-19 vaccination experience: A guide for health providers

In Canada, about 1 in 4 adults report they are afraid of needles and about 1 in 10 report that concerns about needle pain influence their decision to get vaccinated.

In the current COVID-19 pandemic, vaccines are considered critical in stopping the spread of the virus. Minimizing barriers to vaccination is important to ensuring the success of a national COVID-19 vaccination program and ending the pandemic.

There are many simple, effective, safe and cost-neutral methods of reducing pain and fear related to vaccination. The **CARD** (**C**omfort, **A**sk, **R**elax, **D**istract) system was developed to reduce stress during vaccination. Each letter category relates to a different group of evidence-based activities that health providers and individuals can *play* to have a better vaccination experience.

Read this factsheet to find out about the CARDS you can play to help individuals have a more positive COVID-19 vaccination experience and promote vaccination.

**Comfort** strategies encourage serenity and physical ease.

Immunizers can set up vaccination settings that are aesthetically appealing, include comfortable seating and accommodate a support person. Provide information about CARD (coping tips) to individuals ahead of time so they know what to expect and how to cope. During vaccination, encourage individuals to sit upright and to relax their arm. If prone to getting dizzy or fainting, offer muscle tension or lying down during the procedure.

**Ask** questions to be prepared.

People are anxious when they do not have enough information.

What questions do you have? Review immunization policies related to reducing stress and pain and promoting client-centred care.

Invite individuals to ask questions and to play their CARDS during vaccination.

**Relax** strategies help keep people calm.

Promote calmness by providing private spaces for vaccination, reducing fear cues (words or objects that are fear-inducing, such as needles) and minimizing excessive noise and activity. Be calm and positive.

**Distract** strategies shift attention away from the needle.

For individuals that want to be distracted during vaccination, offer to engage in a conversation. Some people do not want to be distracted. That's ok too.