

HealthyBaby

IT'S ALL ABOUT CARING FOR YOUR CHILD

How to calm doctor visit fears

Once your baby gets a little older (usually around 7 to 9 months), she may start having stranger anxiety—especially when it comes to visiting the pediatrician. Here's some expert advice to minimize her fears.

Make sure your baby is well-fed and rested.

"A full stomach will make for a happier baby. And try to schedule your visit after your baby's nap," says Michelle Linsmeier, M.D., a pediatrician at Children's Medical Group of Children's Hospital of Wisconsin in Milwaukee.

Communicate calmness. "Ask the office staff questions ahead of time (such as what information the pediatrician will want to know, what shots your baby will be receiving, and if the doctor runs on time). It can reduce your stress, which makes baby more comfortable," says Paul S. Horowitz, M.D., a pediatrician in Portland, Ore.

Pack a favorite blanket. "Most physicians want to have the baby undressed during the exam. Have a blanket ready to wrap the baby in while you're waiting for the doctor," Linsmeier suggests.

Distract your baby with a drink. Nursing (or giving a bottle) while your child receives vaccinations can reduce crying by up to 90 percent.

Hold your baby close until directed otherwise. "Sometimes the parents' reflex is to lay the baby down on the examining table when they're talking to the physician. The baby will be more comfortable and at ease if mom or dad holds her as much as possible," Linsmeier says. — VANESSA GENEVA AHERN

