6. Make a fist with your right hand then release. Next push down with your elbow.
7. Repeat with your left arm.
8. Move your head from side to side and back to front to stretch and tense your neck muscles.
9. Now frown, then wrinkle your nose.
10. Finally, smile and clench your jaw tight, then relax.
11. Finish with five more slow deep breaths then ask your child to open their eyes.

Throughout the exercise remind them to keep breathing slowly and deeply.

Further information
For further information or advice contact the Children’s Pain Team on:
Tel: 0115 924 9924 ext 84551 / 66236

Feedback
We appreciate and encourage feedback. If you need advice or are concerned about any aspect of care or treatment please speak to a member of staff or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS):
Freephone: 0800 183 0204
From a mobile or abroad: 0115 924 9924 ext 65412 or 62301
E-mail: pals@nuh.nhs.uk
Letter: NUH NHS Trust, c/o PALS, Freepost NEA 14614, Nottingham NG7 1BR
www.nuh.nhs.uk

Distraction and relaxation techniques for children
Information for parents and carers

Children’s Pain Management

This document can be provided in different languages and formats. For more information please contact:

Children’s Pain Team
Nottingham Children’s Hospital
Queen’s Medical Centre
E Floor, East Block

Tel: 0115 924 9924 ext 84551 / 66236

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1. Deep breathing exercises
Ask your child to start to breathe in through their nose, slowly and deeply – ask them to imagine they are smelling a beautiful flower.

Then ask them to breathe out through their mouth – imagining they are blowing out candles on a birthday cake. They can also imagine blowing up a balloon or blowing bubbles. Keep encouraging them to do this slow deep breathing.

2. Using their imagination
Children have vivid imaginations and asking them to imagine something they enjoy doing can distract them very effectively. This can be anything you like; it could be their favourite sport, holiday, beach, swimming pool, friends, family or games. The choice must be theirs.

Encourage them to take some nice deep breaths and then start to imagine that they are in their special place or doing their favourite thing. If they feel comfortable, they can close their eyes while they do this. You can quietly ask questions like:

- What can you see?
- What can you hear?
- What can you smell?
- Is anyone else with you?

Or questions about the sport they are doing, such as:

- What position are you playing?

Carry on encouraging your child to breathe deeply and imagine.

3. Distraction
There are lots of things you can do with your child instead of thinking about what is happening to them. The play specialist or nurse has some great books, games and toys for you to use. You may want to:

- Look at a book like Where's Wally?
- Read a story

- Play with a musical toy
- Blow bubbles
- Sing a song
- Practice counting
- Watch a video
- Or you may have your own ideas to bring along

4. Positive thinking
Try to stop your child thinking or saying things like: “I can't do this” or “This will really hurt”. Instead, encourage them to start thinking or saying things like: “I can do this!” or “I know I can do this” or “This might hurt a little bit but I will feel better soon”. Remind your child how pleased they will be with themselves when this is over.

5. Muscle relaxation
You can help your child to play a game where you relax all the muscles in your body. This works well with some deep slow breathing too. You can do relaxation exercises with your child both here and at home.

It is best if you can do the exercise in a warm, quiet and comfortable place with minimal distractions. While you do this exercise with your child encourage them to breathe slowly and deeply and close their eyes if they feel comfortable with this.

After they have squeezed or tightened each muscle for five seconds, ask them to relax and let the muscle go loose and floppy.

1. Make yourself comfortable on your chair or bed. Take five slow deep breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth.
2. Wiggle your toes then push them down and arch your feet. Then relax and let your feet and legs go floppy.
3. Squeeze the big muscle in your thigh then relax and let your legs go floppy.
4. Next squeeze your tummy muscles.
5. Now lift your shoulders up and then pull your shoulder blades together.

(continued overleaf)