

# Pain management for infant injections

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According to pain management specialist Professor Denise Harrison, an Honorary Senior Fellow at the University of Melbourne, breastfeeding and the use of sweet water can help to calm babies during immunisation.

In a new YouTube study video released recently, entitled *Be Sweet to Babies*, Professor Harrison shows the effectiveness of breastfeeding and the use of [sugar water](#) during infant immunisation. Professor Harrison, who worked at the Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne for many years, is now based at Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO) and has a shared University of Ottawa and University of Melbourne

appointment. "I like to use the occasional YouTube video as a teaching tool to show techniques to students," she said.

"I was searching for a suitable video on how to reduce pain during injections and I found none. I was disappointed to see that research-based effective pain-reducing strategies—particularly breastfeeding, giving sugar water and holding the babies in a secure front-to-front position—were not being used or shown," explains Harrison.

In the 142 YouTube videos that were assessed, almost all of the babies (94%) cried before or during the injection, with some crying non-stop for over two minutes after the injection. In 16 (11%) of the videos, a parent was not visible at any time during the immunisation procedure; babies were left lying on their back on the examination table, crying. Providing sugar water and breastfeeding, both proven to be pain-reducing methods, were not used. Talking and singing to the child was used most often.

The Be Sweet to Babies team carried out a systematic review of a large number of videos to formally study them with the aim of using YouTube videos showing the best pain-reducing strategies for babies. "The fear of needles begins as early as the age of two and sometimes sooner but it may be possible to avoid very common and sometimes extreme reactions to immunisation by applying pain management strategies with infants." "Parents are the advocates for their babies and should do what's best for them. Parents should inform medical and nursing practitioners that they will be [breastfeeding](#) babies or giving them sugar water," advises Harrison. With reduced pain during immunisation, [babies](#) will be less distressed, which, over time, minimises the effects of fear and leads to a more peaceful experience for both parents and children.

Provided by University of Melbourne

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