



Tips and Tricks for Smoother Infusions


Peripheral Sticks

 **Get Hydrated:** Drink water. Then drink more water. Make it silly—try fun straws and fun cups. Your child doesn't want to chug liquid? That's okay—popsicles are also a great way to hydrate.


.....

 **Hot Towel Treatment:** Wrap your hand and lower arm in a hot, steamy towel for about 20 minutes before you poke. This helps the veins to be very visible.


.....

 **Swing High, Swing Low:** Swing your arms up and down to increase blood flow. You can also dangle your arms low.


.....

 **Too Tight:** Don't tighten or tie the tourniquet too tight (or for too long—generally not for longer than a minute). It can create too much pressure in the vein and make it easier to “blow.” Sometimes using a blood pressure cuff is better than the tourniquet. Or you could try double tourniquets.

.....


 **Sight and Feel:** Ask friends and family members to let you feel for their veins and learn to find veins by touch on your own arms. Don't just look, feel. Sometimes the very best veins aren't visible to the eye.

.....


 **Check Your Angles:** You may be going right through the vein. You only need to insert the needle tip just within the vein. Shallow out that angle. Select the smallest gauge needle you can use. Position the catheter tip bevel up. Approach angle to skin at 10–15 degrees,

as if imagining the needle is an airplane landing on a runway. Deeper veins need a greater angle. Superficial veins require a lesser angle. Lower the angle once blood return is observed. Remember, the whole needle does not need to be in the vein!


.....

 **Tap, Tap:** Apply the tourniquet. Lightly tapping the skin or area where you see veins will help expand the vessel.


.....

 **Stroking:** Stroke the vein toward the hand so that the blood flows through the vein, helping you to spot a vein.


.....


 **Pump, Pump, Pump It Up!:** Have your child open and close his/her fist while you are looking for a vein, but then have them keep the arm relaxed during venipuncture. Sometimes it is helpful to squeeze a squishy object, like a stress ball.

.....

 **Palpation:** Apply the tourniquet. Use your index finger to palpate the veins. Press directly on the vein with your index finger, assessing for vein softness and volume. Then release the pressure slowly without lifting your finger and feel the vein bounce back to your index finger. Repeat often to ensure you have found a suitable vein. Don't stick without palpating the vein!

.....


 **“Mark” the Spot:** Palpitate for the vein, and don't move your eyes from the spot. Then wipe and put the alcohol wipe in a diamond shape so a corner is pointing right where the vein is.

 **Anchor Away:** Once you've decided on the exact point of entry, get in the habit of placing a thumb a few inches distal to the site and pulling traction. Pull harder than you think is necessary. You're trying to anchor down all that flesh and eliminate the possibility of movement. All veins roll.


.....

 **Practice, practice, practice.**


.....

 **Let it Go:** Give yourself permission to fail sometimes. Nobody gets every poke, every time. When it happens, pull out the needle and apologize, “I'm sorry, that one didn't go where we needed it.” Then start looking for the next site. Advice from an EMT: “Once you drop that failed needle in the sharps box, forget about it. The previous failure has no bearing on your next attempt. Don't let it haunt you... your last IV attempt is already in the history books. The next one is still a question mark. That makes the next one immeasurably more important. Go get the next one.”

.....

 **Patience is a Virtue:** Take the time to find and assess veins. Some veins are located deep. Veins won't change position just because you are in a hurry.

.....

 **Take a Deep Breath:** Both you and your child! Let them know when you are ready to stick and tell them to take a deep breath and blow it out slowly. This will distract them from the stick and help the tension in their arm.