

How to Calm an Agitated Pediatric Patient: De-escalation Tips



Create a Calm, Safe Setting

- Remove dangerous objects and equipment.
- Monitor the patient in a calm space. Dim the lights and minimize noise.
- Try to reduce stress and stimulation. They can come from many sources, even family or caregivers.
- Use the minimum, reasonable level needed of medicine, physical restraint, and security staff. Don't overuse them.

Reduce Agitated Behavior

- Respect the patient's personal space.
- Listen to them and their caregiver.
- Keep a neutral tone and body language.
- Speak clearly and be brief.
- Avoid actions or words that may annoy, excite, or stimulate the patient.
- Identify the patient's wants and feelings.
- Offer the patient choices and reasons to feel hopeful and confident.
- Reward them when they cooperate.

Use Calming Methods

- Listen to the patient. Tell them you understand they are upset.
- Ask if they need food or a drink.
- Provide distraction, such as a safe activity, food, or a warm blanket.
- Let them know what you are about to do and why.
- Explain what they can expect in an Emergency Department.
- Update the patient and family about all aspects of care – how long wait times will be, what type of care will or may be provided, etc.
- When the patient is calm, review with them and their care team about what just took place.

Remember: As you interact with an agitated patient, items hanging around your neck can be a possible safety risk. Tuck these items out of the way: long hair, jewelry, necklaces, stethoscopes, and ID badges.



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