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Distress

How to Assess: Distress

TRAUMATIC STRESS IN ILL OR INJURED CHILDREN



Pain: Use your hospital's pediatric pain assessment. Ask:

- **Current pain:** "How is your pain right now?"
- **Worst pain:** "What was the worst pain you have had since this happened?"

Fears and Worries:

- "Sometimes children are scared or upset when something like this happens. Is there anything that has been scary or upsetting for you?"
- "What worries you most?"

Grief or Loss:

- Anyone else hurt or ill?
- Other recent losses? (loss/damage to home, pet, etc.)

NCTSN

The National Child
Traumatic Stress Network

www.NCTSN.net

How to help: Distress

Tips to help families of injured or ill children

- 1 Provide the child with as much control as possible over the clinical encounter. The child should:**
 - understand what is about to happen
 - have a say in what is about to happen
 - have some control over pain management
- 2 Actively assess and treat pain.**
 - Use your hospital's pain management protocol
- 3 Listen carefully to hear how the child understands what is happening.**
 - After explaining diagnosis or procedure, ask the child to say it back to you.
 - Remember that the child's understanding may be incomplete or in error.
- 4 Clarify any misconceptions.**
 - Provide accurate information.
 - Use words and ideas the child can understand.
- 5 Provide reassurance and realistic hope.**
 - Describe what is being done to help the child get better.
 - State that there are many people working together to help the child.
- 6 Pay attention to grief and loss.**
 - Mobilize your hospital's bereavement service and/or grief protocols.
 - Encourage parents to listen to their child's concerns and be open to talking about their child's experience.