

NEEDLE FEARS

You have been prescribed a medication that requires an injection and/or lab work to see how a medication is working. It is not uncommon to have a fear, aversion or phobia of needles. Many kids and adults experience this. In fact, fear and anxiety are a normal and adaptive part of life that can help prepare us for danger. The problem arises when our body tells us there is danger, when there is no **real** danger. The good news: there are tools to help you overcome your fears. We have put this handout together to let you know you are not alone. Please see the below tips and tools that can help you get the medication that your body needs or get the blood work that your doctors need to help you.

Tips for dealing with needle fears:

- Phobias are common, and you are not going crazy.
- Phobias **can** be successfully managed.
- If you currently work with a counsellor, have them do some needle-anxiety work with you.
- Find out what the real fear is. Is it pain? Is it the needle? Is it blood? Is it the unknown?
- Realistic thinking: get the facts, ask your nurse...
 - How big is the needle?
 - Will it hit my bone?
 - Will I bleed?
 - Will I get an infection?
 - What other worries do you have?
- Face your fear: draw up an exposure "training program" (see below for an example)
- Find your own techniques: what works for you?
 - Listening to music
 - Watching your favourite show/video
 - Counting 1,2,3 and or coughing
 - Holding a parent's or partner's hand or getting a side hug
 - Positioning: sitting or laying
 - Eyes open or eyes closed
 - Pain control: ice pack, numbing cream, tapping the area above the injection site
 - Muscle tension and relaxation
 - Controlled breathing

These tips were compiled by the resources from Anxiety Canada's website: anxietycanada.com.

Example of Facing Your Fears: Needles

You are VERY afraid of needles. You may tend to avoid going to the doctor because you worry you will have to get a needle. Your doctor has prescribed you a medication that needs an injection and you are worried that if you don't overcome your fear, it could be bad for your health

Goal: To **tolerate** getting an injection

The goal is not to feel completely comfortable getting needles—as most people aren't—but to be able to tolerate them.

If you have a history of fainting when you get needles, you can see the resource on Applied Tension Technique,* which can help him avoiding fainting (link below).

Exposure Training Program — Fear Ladder:

Step Fear Rating

- | | | |
|-------|---|----|
| ○ 1. | Looking at a picture of a needle | 2 |
| ○ 2. | Watching video clips of someone getting a needle | 3 |
| ○ 3. | Watching an apple being injected | 3 |
| ○ 4. | Holding a needle | 4 |
| ○ 5. | Rubbing an alcohol swab against one's skin | 5 |
| ○ 6. | Resting the needle against one's skin | 6 |
| ○ 7. | Resting needle against vein | 7 |
| ○ 8. | Watching someone else get a needle | 7 |
| ○ 9. | Slightly pricking one's skin with a needle | 8 |
| ○ 10. | Getting a shot in the upper arm or fleshy part of leg | 9 |
| ○ 11. | Having blood drawn from a vein | 10 |



Your "training program" would work through these steps 1-11 to try to decrease your fear rating. Example found at anxietycanada.com/sites/default/files/Examples_of_Fear_Ladders.pdf

For more great resources, visit anxietycanada.com and check out:

- MAP: "My Anxiety Plan" course
- *MindShift* CBT app (iOS and Android)
- Video and audio resources
- Free downloadable resources:
 - anxietycanada.com/free-downloadable-pdf-resources
- *Applied Tension Technique:
 - anxietycanada.com/sites/default/files/blood_and_needles.pdf