

## 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.

### 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 nurses....**
  - 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
  - Counting 1,2,3 and or coughing
  - Holding parents' hands
  - Getting a side hug from parents
  - Positioning: sitting or laying down
  - 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](http://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 resources on Applied Tension Technique\*, which can help you avoid 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. An example can be found at [www.anxietycanada.com/sites/default/files/Examples\\_of\\_Fear\\_Ladders.pdf](http://www.anxietycanada.com/sites/default/files/Examples_of_Fear_Ladders.pdf).

For more great resources, visit [anxietycanada.com](http://anxietycanada.com) and check out:

- Map: "My Anxiety Plan" course
- MindShift CBT app (iOS and Android)
- Video and audio resources
- Free downloadable resources
  - [www.anxietycanada.com/free-downloadable-pdf-resources](http://www.anxietycanada.com/free-downloadable-pdf-resources)
- Applied Tension Technique
  - [www.anxietycanada.com/sites/default/files/blood\\_and\\_needles.pdf](http://www.anxietycanada.com/sites/default/files/blood_and_needles.pdf)

**What if I still need more support?**

**Speak to your primary endocrinologist** about a referral to **Medical Psychology** for their needle phobia program.  
 Website: <http://www.bcchildrens.ca/our-services/hospital-services/psychology>