

Helping Your Child With Needle Phobia

Making needles less scary — one poke at a time!

What is Needle Phobia?

Needles are a routine part of healthcare—whether for vaccines, blood tests, or medications. While most kids don't love getting poked, some experience extreme fear, making medical visits stressful. This can affect their health, school, travel, and even future jobs requiring vaccinations.

Speak to your
healthcare team for
more information.



Signs to Watch For:

- Intense fear, crying, or avoiding needles
- Some children may even faint—if this happens, have them lie down before and after the poke

Ways to Help

Before the needle

Talk about it

- Ask: What feels scary? (Pain? Not knowing what will happen?)
- Offer tools: Numbing cream (EMLA™) or vibrating ice packs (like Buzzy™) to reduce pain
- Explain: Why do we need this? ("To keep you healthy!")
- Set expectations: "It might feel like a quick pinch—let's try pinching your arm to see!"
- Involve them: "Do you want to bring a toy? Watch a video? Hold my hand?"
- Plan a reward: A fun activity after? Favorite snack?

Make it familiar

- Play doctor at home to practice the experience

Practice Coping Skills

- Deep breathing (pretend to blow up a balloon)
- Imagining a happy place
- Personalized strategies—everyone is different!

During the needle

Distraction & comfort are key

- Play music or watch a video
- Bring a toy, fidget item, or book
- Close eyes or look away
- Hold a parent's hand and squeeze when scared — or sit on their lap if possible

Parents: Stay Calm & Positive

- Your energy sets the tone — stay relaxed and supportive!
- Avoid saying, "It won't hurt" (if it does, they may lose trust)

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After the Needle

Celebrate the Win!

- Praise their effort, not just the outcome ("You were so brave!")
- Plan small steps for next time
- Offer a little treat or fun activity to reinforce a positive experience

Reminder: You're Not Alone!

Needle phobia is common, and with the right strategies, we can make it easier. Your healthcare team is here to help—reach out for more tips and resources!

Speak to your
healthcare team for
more information.



Scan for more information



Needle Fears and Phobia
From CHEO (Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario)



Acute Pain and Needle Fear Resources
From The University of Guelph



Vaccination and Needle Phobia
From The Royal Children's Hospital of Melbourne