



# OVERCOMING Your FEAR OF NEEDLES

## A GUIDE FOR ADULTS

Do you experience anxiety or fear around needles? You're not alone. Needle phobia, also known as trypanophobia, is a common condition affecting millions of Australians. It can lead to missed vaccinations, delayed medical care, and significant distress. But the good news is, you can overcome your fear and get the essential healthcare you need.

### Understanding Needle Phobia



- **Symptoms**

Physical symptoms like anxiety, dizziness, fainting, nausea, and sweating are common. You may also experience intense emotional distress and an urge to avoid needles.

- **Causes**

Genetics, past negative experiences, and misinformation can contribute to the development of needle phobia.

- **Impact**

Missed vaccinations and delayed medical care can put your health at risk, leading to complications.



### Before the appointment

- **Talk to your healthcare provider:** Be open about your fear and discuss strategies to manage it during medical procedures. Some options include:
  - Asking about pain management options and devices
  - Choosing an early appointment where possible
  - Opting to lie down for comfort
  - Have someone hold your hand
  - Bringing along a distraction like music or a book
  - Limiting number of needles to one per visit
- **Set realistic goals:** Start small and gradually increase the difficulty of your exposure practice. For example, you could:
  - Look at pictures of needles online
  - Watch videos of people getting injections
  - Practice counting to three to anticipate the pinch
- **Reward yourself:** Celebrate your progress and achievements, no matter how small. This could be a treat, some extra time for relaxation, or simply acknowledging your bravery.
- **Find a support system:** Talk to friends, family, or online support groups for understanding and encouragement.



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## During the appointment

- **Use relaxation techniques:** Counter feelings of anxiety by practicing calming breathing techniques like Four Square or 4-7-8 breathing. Additionally, mindfulness meditation and progressive muscle relaxation can also be helpful tools for managing needle-phobia.
- **Focus on your senses:** Pay attention to sounds, smells, or objects around you to distract yourself from the needle.
- **Ask questions:** Don't be afraid to ask the healthcare provider about the procedure and what to expect.
- **Give yourself credit:** Acknowledge your courage and remind yourself that you are taking control of your fear.



## After the appointment

- **Relax and reward yourself:** Take some time to unwind and do something you enjoy.
- **Reflect on your progress:** Celebrate your achievements and identify areas for improvement.
- **Continue practicing exposure:** Don't let your guard down. Continue to gradually expose yourself to needles to maintain your progress.
- **Seek professional help:** If your fear is severe or interferes with your daily life, consider seeking help from a therapist specialising in phobias and anxiety disorders.



## HELPFUL RESOURCES

**The Immunisation Foundation of Australia** <https://www.ifa.org.au/>

**The Australian Childhood Immunisation Register** <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/australian-immunisation-register>

**NeedleCalm** <https://needlecalm.com.au/>

**The Centre for Clinical Interventions** <https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/>

**Mental Health Victoria** <https://mvec.mcri.edu.au/references/needle-phobia/>

**Melbourne Vaccine Education Centre** <https://mvec.mcri.edu.au/references/needle-phobia/>

**Needle-phobia intervention program** <https://www.thehealthhub.org.au/needle-phobia-intervention-program/>

