

What is trypanophobia?

Trypanophobia is an intense fear of needles or needle phobia. It affects about 25% of adults and an even larger percentage of children.

A fear of anything can become a phobia when:

- It becomes a repeated problem
- The fear is out of proportion to the situation
- A person avoids getting injections or delays getting infusions or blood draw
- They have more distress than what's typical
- They think about the procedure more than expected
- It starts to affect other aspects of their life, like their sleeping or eating

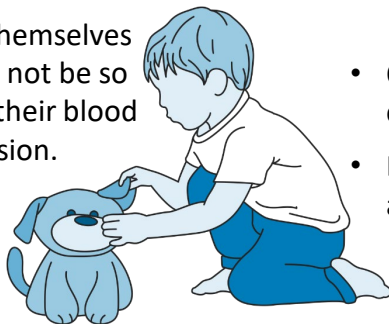
Preparation & education

Learn about the fear of needles and try to understand what it means to live with this fear. Talk to your child and help them understand. Together, learn what you need to do to take care of it at different ages.

Preparing is important. Think about what will happen and what you need to get done during an infusion, injection or blood draw. Think about how the process happens and the space where it will happen. Planning can help give your child a sense of control!

Tips for younger kids:

- Medical play helps them become familiar with equipment, making it less threatening. Using a doll or stuffed animal and pretend equipment's (like doctor's kits, bandages, Q-tips) can help show what will happen to them.
- Use needles syringes in non-medical ways, like painting or water play.
- Your child can familiarize themselves with the motions so it may not be so scary once it's time to get their blood drawn, an injection or infusion.
- Deal with anticipatory anxiety – set a time and don't avoid it!



Tips for older kids:

- Identify a support person who can help them cope.
- Advocate for pain control! Ask your medical team about options to reduce pain in your situation:
 - Ice packs
 - Topical pain reducers, like LMX or EMLA
 - Synera patch
- Once you know what works for your child, ask for it when the time comes.
- Deal with anticipatory anxiety – set a time and don't avoid it!



Tips

Here are some ways to reduce fear and improve the experience:

- If you have anxiety, *preparing will help.*
 - If your anxiety is severe, *psychotherapy may help.*
- If pain is the problem, *reducing the pain or the experience of pain can help.*
- If a past experience is the problem, *find ways to make future experiences more positive.*
- If there's concern about the contents of the infusion or concerns about a blood draw, *ask the doctor or care team about it and use cognitive restructuring (different ways to think about it).*





Relaxation

- Breathing
 - Pretend to blow out candles
 - Inhale the flowers
- Listen to calm music
- Use guided imagery
- Relaxation apps (like Headspace or Calm)
- Self-help books
- Practice applied tension – tense an unrelated muscle for 10-15 seconds, relax and repeat
- Practice relaxation at home



Distraction

- **Nonverbal/infants**
 - Rocking/ singing/eye contact
 - Toys with lights/sounds
- Listen to music
- Work on riddles
- Watch a movie or TV
- Have a conversation
- Play an I spy game
- Play with apps/games on phone
- Play with puppets
- Interactive books



Positive thinking

- Also called *cognitive restructuring*
- **Help your child think positively and build coping statements, like:**
 - “If I can manage my bleeding disorder, I can do great things.”
 - “After my factor infusion, I can go to soccer practice, and I’ll be able to play as hard as I can.”
 - “I don’t like getting an injection but it’s over quickly.”
 - “I did it before. I can do it again.”



Pairing

Pairing something positive with the infusion/injection helps children make a positive association.



Reinforcement

- A reinforcement acts a motivator – it isn’t a bribe.
- Consider using a procedure checklist with associated rewards for completing the tasks.
- A prize or purchase may be good but avoid making it seem like the procedure was a big deal.



Anxiety hierarchy

- **Easier steps:**
 - Play with a doctor kit
 - Watch a successful discussion of others talking about completing an infusion / injection
- **Medium steps:**
 - Practice steps of an infusion/injection without medication
 - Get a pretend injection with a dull item
- **Challenging steps:**
 - If your child gets anxious doing an infusion/injection – maybe try watching a video of the process
 - Give yourself/your child the infusion/injection



Provide choices

- Choices provide a sense of control.
- Be realistic about the choices offered.
- Don’t allow specific choices to delay the infusion/injection.
- Give them the choice to watch or not watch the infusion/injection.

Make your own plan

Identify which ideas are likely to be most helpful to you · Make a change to make it better · Small steps · Practice

Websites & educational resources

Boston Bleeding Disorders Center www.childrenshospital.org/programs/boston-bleeding-disorders-center

National Bleeding Disorders Foundation www.hemophilia.org

New England Hemophilia Association www.newenglandhemophilia.org

World Foundation of Hemophilia www.wfh.org

HemAware www.hemaware.org

LA Kelley Communications www.kelleycom.com

