



**Guy's and St Thomas'**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# OVER COMING NEEDLE PHOBIA

Created by the GSTT Community Learning Disability Nursing Service.

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# Needle Phobia

- A needle phobia is when people have an intense fear about needles and having injections.
- There may be identifiable reasons for this e.g past negative experience, poor support, lack of explanation etc
- There may be no obvious reason.
- This might manifest itself as avoidance of situations where the person might be asked to have an injection e.g. GP surgery, clinic.
- Associations might be made with specific healthcare professionals.
- Effects on person, distress, upset, aggression, poor healthcare etc

# Consent

- Apply the principles of the Mental Capacity Act, 2005.
- Support person to understand what the process involves and the implications for refusing it.
- If the person is assessed as not having capacity to make the decision then a best interest decision should be made in line with the Mental Capacity Act.
- Consider use of Equalities Act 2010 and reasonable adjustments e.g. need for specialist professionals such as AWLD team, GP, Acute Liaison Nurse, MHLN team.
- Consider if personalised desensitisation required.
- Balance health need against risk; consider if sedation required (best interests)

# Preparing for needle desensitisation

- Ask the person how they feel.
- Reassure them that their anxiety will not get in the way of their treatment.
- Allow the person to ask questions regarding the procedure. (This will help to reassure them that nothing bad is going to happen).
- Ask person if they want someone to be with them
- Ask person if they want someone to talk to them during the procedure.
- Ask person if they prefer quiet.
- Ask person if they want someone to hold their hands.

# Relaxation strategies

- Refer to needle phobia and relaxation guidance on GSTT Intranet.
- Use breathing exercises.
- Ask person to sit in a comfortable position, relaxing jaws and shoulders.
- Take a long, slow, deep breathe in and breathe slowly through the mouth. Repeat 5 times.
- Build up gradually to facing fear; enlist support of health professionals.

# Distraction Techniques

- Listen to favourite music
- Read a book or magazine
- Play games on their phone or tablets.
- Watch video on iPad
- Talk to somebody
- Hold hands
- Counting 1-100
- Recite songs or rhymes

# Useful resources and services

- <https://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/resources/patient-information/all-patients/overcoming-your-fear-of-needles.pdf>
- Reading/article.... **Brief Guide: Overcoming blood and needle phobias and medical anxiety.** [www.haemochromatosis.org.uk](http://www.haemochromatosis.org.uk)
- Social stories ...(Blood tests for people with learning disabilities: making reasonable adjustments. (2017). Public Health England, protecting and improving the nation's health. [www.gov.uk/phe](http://www.gov.uk/phe))
- Consent:... <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2DsuasWObWw>
- **Adults with Learning Disabilities Health Teams (Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark) :** [gst-tr.AWLDHealthTeam@nhs.net](mailto:gst-tr.AWLDHealthTeam@nhs.net)