

Managing Needle Phobia in Your Clinic

For Clinicians

For some patients having blood taken or having an injection will be the most stressful thing they have done in a long time. There could also be a long build-up of anxiety about the procedure prior to coming to the appointment. Help lessen the stress and be confident. If the patient expresses concern and you are not experienced - ask an experienced practitioner to perform the procedure instead.

Have the conversation

Ask your patient "How are you with needles?" Acknowledge the patient's concerns and let them know it's okay. Try not to be dismissive of anyone's fear or anxiety.

Use positive language

Communication that creates negative expectations of the procedure will increase reported levels of pain.

Avoid trigger words like shot, jab, sharp scratch, ouch coming now.

What you can say instead is: feels like a mozzie bite, quick flick, push coming now. And tell the patient to take a big deep breath in when you insert the needle and get them to push on NeedleCalm™ if appropriate.

Avoid complex or unfamiliar medical terminology as patients may have difficulty interpreting medical words which may cause anxiety and worry.

Educate your patient, especially with IV cannulas. Reassure there is no permanent needle staying in their arm. Instead, you could say something like "it's a little straw." It's surprising how many people think the needle remains in their arm.

Promoting Patient control

Assigning the patient a role or task can help them feel in control and build a sense of mastery. This can be pushing on NeedleCalm™.

can assign them a role 'your special job is to keep your arm as still as a statue'.

Let them choose: Would you like to watch or look away?

Distraction

Laugh, make a bad joke, talk about your pets. Bubbles, toys, look what's out the window? Whatever works... make it fun!

Set up for success

Provide a comfortable environment, minimise noise and distractions and ensure privacy. Give the patient 100% of your attention. Offer a comfortable place to lie down. Refer back to the conversation earlier. For needle-phobic patients it's always better if they can lie down just in case they faint. They can also keep warm with a blanket, close their eyes and use deep breathing. You could also ask them to practice applied tension or the 4-square breathing technique. Most importantly don't be in a rush.

Be Prepared

Organise your equipment so that you are not looking around for things. Get your NeedleCalm™ setup last so it stays cold.

Have an exit plan

It's important to discuss with the patient in advance what will happen if the procedure fails and when to stop. Setting up clear boundaries for when to abort a procedure in advance makes it easier to stop when things aren't going to plan.

End with a positive experience

Rewards are a great incentive. Offer some sugar after the procedure and some words of encouragement. It helps with shock, especially if they haven't had anything to eat for a while.

Calm Practitioner equals Calm Patient!