# Coping with Needle Fear

You Are Not Alone

Fear of needles is very real and very physical for many people. It is a phobia with an actual medical insurance code. It's also nothing to be embarrassed about. As a kidney patient, however, it is something with which you must learn to cope—for your health.

What causes needle fear?

Needle fear is caused by many different triggers, including fear of:

- Seeing needles
- Handling needles
- Thinking of needles
- Cannulation by someone else
- Self-cannulation
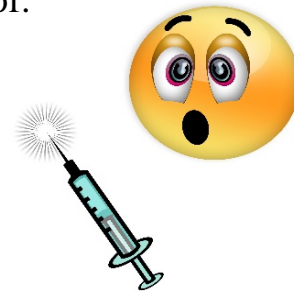
Needle fear can cause…

A series of physical reactions, including:

- An increase in heart rate and blood pressure
- A responsive decrease in heart rate and blood pressure to ensure your brain gets enough blood
- The release of stress hormones and possible heart rhythm irregularities
- In turn causing a person to become, pale, sweaty, dizzy, nauseous, or even to pass out

Tips for Reducing Needle Fear

It is possible to reduce needle fear by training your body not to react. Talk to your care team before trying any of the following approaches. Facility staff have seen a lot of patients with needle fear; they might be able to help you decide what will work best for you.

- If you get dizzy—bring more blood to your head!
  - Lie flat, or tilt your chair so your feet are higher than your head
- If you fear the pain—kill it!
  - Use a pain killing cream or numbing gel
- If you're generally afraid—get therapy!
  - Desensitization treatments that slowly expose you to your fears may help
- If you fear others sticking you—take charge yourself!
  - Putting in your own needles puts you in control and distracts you from the pain
- If you really can't stand the needles—avoid them!
  - Explore the possibility/appropriateness of peritoneal dialysis (PD) treatments that are needle-free

**It is not your fault that you have needle fear.
What you do about it, however, is up to you.
Do not let your fear of needles keep you from
getting the best treatment for you.
Ask your care team for help.
You are not alone.**