

## **Applied Tension Technique For Children or Teens Who Faint at the Sight of Blood or Needles**

Most people feel a bit uneasy when they see blood or have to get a needle. For some people, however, seeing blood or needles causes them to feel light-headed or actually faint. It is rare to faint from anxiety unless you have this problem. Children or teens who faint when they get an injection or have blood drawn might benefit from learning a simple technique that will help them either prevent fainting altogether, or speed up the recovery time if they do faint.

### **Why does my child faint at the sight of blood or a needle?**

Fainting is due to a sudden drop in your child's heart rate or blood pressure. In most cases, fainting is harmless. *It is important, however, that you discuss your child's fainting with a doctor before teaching this technique or exposing your child to situations (such as needles or blood) that could cause fainting.*

### **The Applied Tension Technique**

The **Applied Tension Technique**<sup>1</sup> is a strategy developed to help prevent fainting or help people recover faster if they do faint. The technique involves tensing muscles in the body, which then raises blood pressure. If your blood pressure increases, you are less likely to faint.

### **How To Do It**

- Have your child sit in a comfortable chair and tense the muscles in his or her arms, legs and trunk for about 10 to 15 seconds. Your child should hold the tension until he or she starts to feel a warm sensation in the head. Then, have him or her relax the body for 20 to 30 seconds. Repeat five times.

### **Practicing**

- Encourage your child to practice the above strategy five times per day for at least a week.

### **Using With Exposure Exercises**

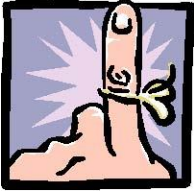
After your child has practiced this technique for at least a week, he or she can start using this strategy when doing exposure exercises to blood and needles. See Module on and Specific Phobia and [Helping your Child to Face Fears: Exposure.](#)

---

<sup>1</sup> The Applied Tension Technique was developed by Lars-Göran Öst

You can use the following explanation to help your child understand:

*We are going to give you a tool for your toolbox.  
When you use this tool, you will be the boss and  
you'll be able to stop yourself from fainting!*



#### Helpful Tips:

- **Speedy Recovery!** If your child does faint, you can help him or her recover faster by lying him or her down and elevating the feet.
- **Tense & Relax!** If you tense your arm when you are receiving a needle, it can be more painful. Encourage your child to relax the arm that will be receiving the needle, while tensing the other parts of the body. Have your child practice this before going to get a needle.
- **Warning!** If your child develops a headache when trying the applied tension technique, encourage him or her to reduce the level of tension or the frequency of practices.
- **Warning Signs!** It can be helpful to have your child learn to recognize the early signs of his or her blood pressure dropping, such as feelings of lightheadedness. Encourage your child to use the tension technique as soon as he or she starts to experience those sensations.
- **Practice!** Even though this strategy sounds simple it takes practice to be helpful!