



Q1 PRESS HIGHLIGHTS

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'My worst nightmare' - fears needle phobia will stop people getting Covid vaccine

WEST COUNTRY
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ITV News

<https://www.itv.com/news/westcountry/2021-02-25/my-worst-nightmare-fears-needle-phobia-will-stop-people-getting-covid-vaccine>

Anxiety UK quoted

She's so scared of jabs they make her faint – and that's surprisingly common. Becky McCall asks...

By Becky McCall

IT'S A wonderfully welcome sight: pictures of people having their Covid vaccinations. But I'm afraid I can't share in the joy.

In fact I can barely look at one without shuddering, as I'm overcome by a mix of panic and nausea. It's not that I don't support the vaccine plan – quite the opposite. As a science writer, I know how safe and effective the jabs are. There's just one problem: I can't bear needles.

The last time I was jabbed by one, during a blood test about five years ago, I had to have it tiring down and almost fainted. I know it seems melodramatic, but I'm far from alone. One in ten of the population suffers needle phobia to some degree.

Mild phobias will flinch or look away at the sight of a needle, and make a huge fuss, but still be able to have a jab.

In severe cases, sufferers can be plagued by nightmares and even avoid leaving the house for fear of encountering something needle-like. Others, like me, suffer a phenomenon called vasovagal syncope, a miscommunication between the nervous system over-reaction to harmless triggers, such as the sight of blood.

The condition is an extreme manifestation of needle-phobia. The stress of having a jab causes a

cascade of hormones to be released in the body and a sudden drop in blood pressure.

This can cause nausea and even loss of consciousness, as the change in blood pressure means there is suddenly too little blood reaching the brain.

Social media went into overdrive last month when a nurse in Tennessee fainted while receiving the Covid vaccine on live TV.

And it was shocking to see – I looked away when she had the actual jab, but watched the all too familiar aftermath.

One moment she's fine, the next she slumps off her chair as worried onlookers rush to help.

There were some wild suggestions that she died as the result of a fatal reaction. In fact, it was vasovagal syncope.

The nurse, Tiffany Dover, later admitted she often faints when having injections. Vasovagal syncope can also be triggered by mild pain – and she said she also faints when she stubs her toe.

I'm not sure when my own phobia began, but the reactions seem to have become more extreme as I've got older. It's linked to the fact that the sight of even ideal blood makes me sear.

If one of my children – aged six and ten – has a knee, it's my partner who steps in to put on the plaster. If they've got a loose tooth, I just can't look. It's too grey.

Needles, by their nature, cause a



How can I get over my needle phobia?

little bit of bleeding, hence my aversion. I used to suffer terrible nosebleeds as a child which would make me faint. I think this is why blood makes me feel anxious.

The first time I passed out was about 15 years ago, after having a travel vaccine prior to a work trip to Panama. Since then I've avoided injections or blood tests unless strictly necessary – and have to have them lying down.

I also spend weeks worrying beforehand, and often cancel and then rebook. It's all rather over the

top, and I don't want to be like this. I hope, at some point soon, to have the Covid vaccine – although as 49 I've got a while to wait.

And I'd like to be able, if not to enjoy the experience, at least not to have to be carried out on a stretcher afterwards.

The NHS-backed approach to overcoming fear of needles, I have discovered, is called applied tension. It's a technique to raise the blood pressure, and so avoid fainting, which you have to practise three times a day for a week before

the injection. Sitting somewhere comfortable, you clench all the muscles in your arms, upper body and legs and hold the tension for about 15 seconds, or until your face begins to feel warm, then relax for 30 seconds. This is repeated five times.

Another technique is 'breathing for relaxation' which the NHS suggests doing in the five days running up to an injection.

Sitting upright, put your hand on your stomach and take long, slow, gentle breaths in through the nose,

and out through the mouth. Do this five times, three times a day.

Another tried-and-tested technique is to make what's known as a 'fear ladder'. On a blank page, write a list of situations involving the thing you're scared of, then give each a score out of ten.

For me, a one out of ten might be thinking about having an injection, while a three would be hearing an anecdote about someone having an injection and how much it hurt and bled.

A ten out of ten would be a masked nurse lunging at me with a knitting-needle-sized hypodermic.

Phobics are advised to pick the least scary thing on their fear ladder and prepare to face it after five days of doing the tension training and breathing exercises. Once that's done, either repeat this or move on to a slightly scarier one.

I decided to give it a go by watching a YouTube video of someone having an injection. I'd say a five out of ten on my fear ladder.

After a day of doing my exercises, I log in, search 'phlebotomy' (blood-letting) and pick a video. As it

Phobias develop in childhood – kids hate injections because they hurt

starts, I have to instruct in my stomach. First we see an arm and a nurse explaining the technique – a teenager is given an extreme example of a vein and blood drawn.

My nerves seemed to look steady. Although I felt a little itchy and uncomfortable, it was fine even as the plunger was pulled back, filling the syringe with blood.

Later I speak to Anxiety UK psychologist Michelle Mould, who has treated dozens of needle phobics. Most of these phobias, she says, develop in childhood – kids hate injections because they hurt.

But if a hysterical child is held down in the situation in otherwise mismanaged, such as with a parent becoming visibly upset, it can make things worse.

These experiences can haunt us into adulthood.

And those who don't like needles, like me, with a phobia, will avoid them more than most. So we never learn not to fear them.

Mould offers sessions of cognitive behavioural therapy, during which the aim is to try to get them to change how they think about injections.

She tells me to focus on the good outcomes (I'll get vaccinated, so I won't get Covid), rather than irrational worries (that I'll bleed to death while writhing in agony).

This rings true to me as, paradoxically, I don't mind having injections at the dentist. I've also had two caesareans, with epidurals, and that didn't bother me either.

In spite, as my irrational mind, the benefits of the injections in those cases – not feeling the pain of the dentist's drill or having a baby – outweighs everything else.

Mould says: 'We think ourselves into phobias and extreme reactions, so we can think our way out of them.'

And so when I do get that letter inviting me to go for my Covid jab, I know just what I need to start doing...

Mail on Sunday – needle phobia article
Anxiety UK quoted

Orders < Anxi... x | Edit User Memi... x | Research - Anxi... x | (3) Notificati... x | (3) Anxiety UK... x | Analytics... x | Hootsuite... x | Hitting the pan... x | +

ve.news/lifestyle/health/hitting-the-pandemic-wall-10-ways-to-cope-as-covid-continues/

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Hitting the pandemic wall? 10 ways to cope as the Covid crisis continues

Words by
Lucy Purdy and Daniel
Fahey

February 19, 2021
Body & Mind
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While vaccines are bringing hope and school re-openings are on the horizon in the UK, the lack of a definitive end to the pandemic is dragging people down like never before. We bring together tips for staying afloat



I. Understand the science behind how you're feeling

Twelve months since this all began, what environmental psychologist Lee Chambers describes as 'lockdown fatigue' is widespread: feelings of brain fog, worsening short term memory and heightened anxiety, to name just three symptoms.

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Positive News

<https://www.positive.news/lifestyle/health/hitting-the-pandemic-wall-10-ways-to-cope-as-covid-continues/>

Anxiety UK quoted

Press Links & Broadcast interviews

BBC News	Post lockdown anxiety	
ITV News	Coronavirus: What You Need To Know'	https://www.itv.com/news/2020-03-19/coronavirus-what-you-need-to-know-itv-news-podcast-with-information-advice-and-analysis-on-the-pandemic
Heart and Smooth FM	Lockdown 3 anxiety	
BBC Radio Bristol	Needle phobia	https://www.facebook.com/171297746260673/videos/252558119578810
BBC Radion	Needle phobia	
Heritage Radio	Covid19 anxiety	
BBC	Lockdown MH	https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000s2ty
Vol	Psychology faith and the mind	https://soundcloud.com/voislam/drive-time-show-podcast-25-03-2021-faith-and-the-mind
BBC Radio	roadmap out of lockdown	
5 Live	MH support	https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000s2ty



Press enquiries for Q1

Media org	Topic	Type
Heart and Smooth FM	Lockdown 3 anxiety	Radio
BBC Radio Bristol	Needle phobia	Radio
Mail on Sunday	Needle phobia	Article
Freelance	Covid related MH	Article
BBC Radio 3 counties	Children's MH due to the pandemic	Campaign
ITV News West Country	Needle phobia	Article
BBC Radion	Needle phobia	Radio
ITN	MH funding	Article
FT	ONS well being data	Article
D Telegraph	Health anxiety	Article
Heritage Radio	Covid19 anxiety	Radio
Freelance	Agoraphobia due to Covid	Article
Care Choices	Childrens' Mental Health Week	Online
DC Publishing	CFT	Article
Freelance	Teenage anxiety & Covid-19	Article
Independent	Managing mental health postlockdown/return to work	Article
BBC	Covid vbaccien related MH case study request	Radio/TV
The Sun	Support contact info	Support booklet
Telegraph	Driving anxiety	Article
BBC	Lockdown MH	Radio
Positive News	Pandemic fatigue	Article
5 Live	MH support	Radio
BBC One	Needle/injection phobia	TV
Metro	Supporting someone tips	Article
Nikkei	Pandemic and anxiety and apps	Article
Social Care Today	Health anxiety and Covid	Article
Vice	Mental Health Pay Gap	Article
BBC News	Post lockdown anxiety	Online?
Sky News	Post lockdown agoraphobia	TV

57 Media Requests this quarter



Press enquiries for Q1

BBC Online	socialising after lockdown	Online
My morning after	Post lockdown fomo	Article
Associated Press	how mental health has been affected by the pandemic	Article
Globo	Needle phobia	Article
The Simple Things	Social anxiety post lockdown	Article
ITV Granada	Panic attacks and Covid	TV
WI Life	Pandemic and anxiety	Article
The Simple Things	Social anxiety post lockdown	Article
ITV News	Coronavirus: What You Need To Know'	Podcast
LADBible	One year on	Article
LAD Bible	Agoraphobia in lockdown	Case studies
Good Housekeeping	Returning to normal	Article
The Sun	Data on fear of going out post lockdown	Article
ITV news	Furlough one year on	TV
New Statesman	Anxiety levels in pandemic	Article
CGTN Europe	Post lockdown anxiety	Online
Vol	Psychology faith and the mind	Radio
STJ	Transport and MH	Article
BBC Radio	roadmap out of lockdown	Radio
Verywell Health	FOGO	Article
CGTN Europe	Post lockdown anxiety	Article
Boots health	FOGO	Article
Daily Telegraph	Anxiety overview	Article
ITV News	Coping with anxiety & OCD in the pandemic	TV
Unilad UOKM8	Post lockdown anxiety	Article
Sunday Times	Post lockdown anxiety	Article
SW Londoner	Post lockdown anxiety	Article
Independent	Social anxiety post lockdown	Article

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