

# A Guide How to Handle Needle-related Fainting

## What is fainting?

- ✓ Fainting is a sudden loss of consciousness for a short period of time
- ✓ It occurs when the brain does not receive enough nutrients
- ✓ The cause is usually an overreaction of the heart and blood vessels to particular triggers: The heart rate slows down and the blood vessels widen. This reflex leads to a sudden drop in blood pressure. As a result, the brain does not get enough nutrients for a short period of time, and the person will become unconscious. This type of fainting is called vasovagal syncope.
- ✓ Well-known triggers:
  - Prolonged standing
  - Heat exposure
  - After physical exertion
  - Painful stimuli
  - Fear of bodily injury
  - Emotional stress
  - Exposure to needles and/ or blood

## What are typical warning signs?

- ✓ Lightheadedness
- ✓ Feeling of being warm or cold
- ✓ Sweating
- ✓ Palpitations
- ✓ Nausea or non-specific abdominal discomfort
- ✓ Short lasting "blurred" vision, darkening or "white-out" of vision
- ✓ Short-lasting hearing loss, hearing of unusual sounds (such as a "whooshing" noise)

## How can I prevent needle-related fainting?

- ✓ Muscle tension can be used before and during a needle procedure
- ✓ Muscle tension increases the blood pressure and prevents a drop in blood pressure
- ✓ If your blood pressure increases, you are less likely to faint

## Who can use muscle tension?

- ✓ Children from 7 years of age on, teenagers, and adults

## How can I use muscle tension?

1. Sit in a chair or on the exam table
2. Cross your legs above your ankles
3. Squeeze your inner thighs and abdominal muscles
4. Stretch your ankles
5. Squeeze for about 5 to 10 seconds
6. Release the tension for about 5 seconds
7. Repeat steps 3 to 5 five times, then switch legs. Repeat until the needle is over or until the feeling of fainting passes.

## Tips

- ✓ Practice the muscle tension technique before you need to use it – even though muscle tension seems to be easy to use, it may need some practice to be helpful
- ✓ Use muscle tension as soon as you start experiencing warning signs of fainting
- ✓ Don't tense the arm where you get a needle as the needle stick may become more painful
- ✓ If you fear to faint, you can also lie down to increase the blood flow to your brain