

Blood Collection

Tips to help you prepare your child

In this handout we will explain what blood collection is like, and how to help you prepare your child. Having blood taken can be scary for a child, but it does not need to be.

Depending on the age of your child and the amount of blood needed for testing, the nurse or lab staff member will do either a finger poke (capillary puncture) or a blood draw (venipuncture).

What is a finger poke?

Finger or heel pokes, also called capillary punctures, are used to obtain a small amount of blood for tests. A small device is used to make a tiny puncture in the skin. The finger or foot is then squeezed gently to move blood to the skin surface in order to collect the drops.

What is a blood draw?

“Blood draw” is the general term we use for taking a blood sample from your child. Venipunctures are used to obtain a larger amount of blood for tests.

The staff member may look at both arms to find the best vein. An elastic band (tourniquet) is first placed around the upper arm to make the veins easier to see or feel. The skin is then cleaned with an alcohol wipe. A small needle is used to make a puncture through the skin and into the vein. The blood flows through the needle and into a syringe or tube. After the blood is collected, the elastic band is removed and the needle is taken out. A bandage is placed over the site on children 2 years and older.



How can I prepare my child for a blood draw?

Each child reacts differently to having blood taken. To help your child, you can:

- Ask us questions if you are unclear about the procedure.
- Prepare your child by telling them what the steps are. Be honest; let them know it may hurt a bit. Use empowering words like, “some kids say it feels like a little pinch.”
- Act strong, use positive words and be relaxed yourself. Do not talk about your fear and anxiety. It can increase your child’s fear and anxiety.
- Use a bear or doll for medical play. Show your child the steps and help them know what to expect.
- Keep your child warm and well hydrated. Offer lots of water and juice the day before. This will help with the blood draw because warm, full veins are easier to find.
- Make a written plan together. This will help your child feel a sense of control. Have your child bring their plan with them to share with the staff their ideas of what will help them. An example of the plan might be:

Tyler’s plan

- *I want my mom or dad right next to me for my blood test.*
- *To help me feel calm, I am going to bring my stuffed bear to hold.*
- *My job is to hold myself still like a statue.*

What questions may be asked?

To help the blood draw go more smoothly, you and your child will often be asked the following questions:

- Have you had blood tests before?
- How did you feel?
- What has helped in the past?

You and your child may also be asked to use distraction techniques during the procedure – like blowing bubbles or a pinwheel or playing with a finger puppet. DVDs and TV are also an option.

Should I stay with my child?

It’s up to you. While we would like parents to be with their child during a blood draw, it’s also fine if you choose to wait in the waiting room. Either way is OK.

If you choose to stay with your child, we will provide you with ideas to help your child during the blood draw.

If you choose to stay outside the room, it’s sometimes helpful to give your child something of yours to hold. Right after the blood draw, we bring your child to you for hugs and support.

To Learn More

- Pain Medicine Services 206-987-2704
- Children's Laboratory 206-987-2617
- Children's Emergency Department 206-987-2222
- Your child's healthcare provider
- www.seattlechildrens.org

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your child's nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.
- For Deaf and hard of hearing callers 206-987-2280 (TTY)

What can I do to help during the blood draw?

- For Infants: Use a soothing voice, or wrap the infant in a favorite blanket. Pacifiers can also be helpful.
- For Toddlers/Preschoolers: Share pop-up books, sing songs, or tell favorite stories. Puppets are also a good distraction. During the blood draw, you can help the child to "blow the hurt away" by breathing like a "choo-choo." Sitting on a parent's lap during a blood draw is often comforting.
- For School-age Children/Teenagers: Helpful distractions include talking about favorite activities, people or vacation spots.

Will it take just one poke for my child's test?

Usually it takes just one puncture, but in some cases it may take more than one. Some children's veins are hard to find and some tests require samples taken over several hours to see the effect of food or medicine on your child. Other resources may be utilized or the doctor contacted if the blood must be collected and the sample can not be obtained.

What do I need to do after the blood draw?

No care is usually needed after blood is taken.

- If the area does bleed later, apply slight pressure until the bleeding stops and put on another Band-Aid.
- If bleeding continues apply pressure to the site, and call your child's doctor or Children's Emergency Department.
- Because a baby's skin is so delicate and the potential risk of choking if the child removes them, Band-Aids are only used on children two years and older.
- Band-Aids can be removed after one hour. An easy way to remove a Band-Aid is to loosen it after a bath or shower.
- Elastic wrap may be used instead of Band-Aids, it should be removed after 15 minutes.
- Bruising may occur at the blood draw site. The area may be tender. If there is redness or swelling at the site call your child's doctor.
- Reward your child.

How do I get the results?

Your child's doctor will get the results of this test. The lab does not give out results to families because the information is best talked over with your child's doctor.

Seattle Children's offers interpreter services for Deaf, hard of hearing or non-English speaking patients, family members and legal representatives free of charge. Seattle Children's will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Call the Family Resource Center at 206-987-2201.

This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Seattle Children's. However, your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child's healthcare provider.

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