

Blood Collection

Tips to help you prepare your child

Lab Hours and Locations

seattlechildrens.org/lab



A blood draw is the term used to describe the collection of a blood sample for testing. The type of blood draw that your child will have depends on their age, the amount of blood needed for testing and the type of testing needed. The nurse or lab staff member will do the blood draw using either a finger or heel poke (capillary puncture) or an arm or hand poke (venipuncture).

What is a capillary blood draw?

A capillary blood draw, such as a finger or heel poke, is used to obtain a small amount of blood for tests. A small device is used to make a tiny puncture into the capillary blood vessels just beneath the skin. The finger or heel is then squeezed gently to move blood to the skin surface to collect the drops into a small tube.

What is a venipuncture blood draw?

A venipuncture blood draw is used to obtain a larger amount of blood for multiple tests, or when tests need blood that comes from a vein instead of a capillary. The veins on the inside of the elbow or on the top of the hand are often used because these are the least sensitive areas to do a venipuncture.

The staff member may look at multiple places to find the best vein to use. An elastic band (tourniquet) is placed around the upper arm or wrist 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 Band-Aid or stretchy wrap is placed over the blood draw site.

How can I prepare my child for a blood draw?

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

- Read the “What to Expect during Your Blood Draw booklet” to learn what to expect and coping strategies at www.seattlechildrens.org/patients-families/clinic-visit/preparing-your-child/ .
- 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 that it may hurt a little bit. Use words like, “some kids say it feels like a pinch.”
- Help your child understand that their most important job during the blood draw is to hold very still. This will help the phlebotomist keep them safe and help the blood draw go faster.
- 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 the day before. This will help with the blood draw because warm, full veins are easier to find.
- Create a blood draw plan using the “What to Expect during Your Blood Draw Booklet” or make your own written plan together. This will help your child feel a sense of control. Have your child bring their plan to share with us 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, we will ask you and your child:

Have you had a blood draw before?

How did you feel?

What has helped in the past?

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 want to wait outside the procedure 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 of the room, it can help to give your child something of yours to hold. When done, we will bring your child to you for hugs and support.

To Learn More

- Pain Medicine Services
206-987-2704
- Laboratory
206-987-2102
- 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 phone extension you need.

What can I do to help during the blood draw?

- You and your child may be asked to use distraction techniques during the procedure.
- **For infants:** Use a soothing voice, or wrap your infant in a favorite blanket. Pacifiers can also be helpful. We can provide sugar water to use with the pacifier upon request.
- **For toddlers or preschoolers:** Share pop-up books, sing songs, use finger puppets, blow bubbles or tell favorite stories. During the blood draw, you can help your child "blow the hurt away" by pretending to blow up a balloon. Let your child sit on you lap during the blood draw for comfort.
- **For school-age children or teenagers:** Distract your child by talking about favorite activities, people or vacation spots. DVDs, hand-held players and TV are also an option.

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

Usually it takes just one poke, but sometimes it takes 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.

What do I need to do after the blood draw?

- Stretchy wrap bandages should be removed after 15 minutes.
- Band-Aids can be removed after one hour. They are easiest to loosen after a bath or shower.
- If the area bleeds later, apply slight pressure until the bleeding stops and put on another Band-Aid.
- Band-Aids are not used on children two years or younger. This is because the adhesive can be hard on their delicate skin. It is also because there is a risk of choking if the Band-Aid comes off or is removed and swallowed.
- If bleeding continues, apply pressure to the site and call your child's doctor or Children's Emergency Department.
- 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 the tests. 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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