

Your child and blood draws

What is a blood draw?

A blood draw is a way to collect blood for lab tests. The tests are done to check your child's health. A blood draw takes about 5 to 10 minutes. You can help with the success of this test.

How do I prepare my child for the test?

The doctor will tell you if anything special needs to be done before the test. Your child can wear normal clothes to the test.

Follow the instructions you are given by the doctor that ordered the test. **Make sure your child drinks plenty of water before any lab draw unless you were told not to.**

Some labs need to be drawn after not eating for a certain amount of time. These are called fasting labs. It is important to follow the fasting lab instructions. If your child eats or drinks anything that would change the test results, the blood draw may be cancelled.

Before the test

For most outpatient blood draws, you will check in and then sit in the waiting area. How long you wait will depend on:

- How many children are being seen that day.
- The type of test that was ordered for your child.

When your child is called, one parent or guardian can come in to the exam room for the draw. All others should stay in the waiting room.

The blood draw will be done by specially trained staff.

How you can help during the test

You can be a big help during the test. You may bring along a comfort item. Bring a favorite stuffed animal or blanket for your child to hold during the blood draw. During the test, you can:

- Stay calm and relaxed.
- Stay near your child.
- Hold your child's hand.
- Let your child sit on your lap for comfort during the blood draw.
- Follow the instructions of the lab staff.
- Ask any questions or discuss concerns about your child's draw or test. Keep in mind some questions will be better answered by your child's doctor.
- Be patient with the lab staff. Every child is different so the length of time to do each test will vary.

How is the test done?

Your child will sit in a comfortable chair with an armrest to lean on while the blood draw is being done. Your child also may sit in your lap.

There are two types of blood draws.

Finger or heel stick. A small needle is used to prick the fingertip or heel in order to collect a few drops of blood. The blood is collected in one or more small tubes. The lab staff will:

- Use a swab to wipe germs off of your child's fingertip or heel.
- Hold your child's finger or heel and poke once with a plastic lancet to get a drop of blood.
- Squeeze the finger or heel to get more blood, and drop the blood onto a tiny tube.
- Collect the blood in one or more thin glass tubes if needed.

After the tubes have been filled, a bandage may be put on your child's finger or heel. The bandage can be taken off after the bleeding stops.

Venipuncture. A needle is used to draw blood out of the vein in your child's inner arm or hand. The lab staff will:

- Ask your child to roll up their sleeve. The blood is normally drawn from the area inside the elbow, where the veins are closest to the skin.
- Wash the area with an antiseptic swab. A tourniquet, which is like a large rubber band, will be tied around your child's upper arm. This makes the veins bulge a little. The tourniquet will feel tight. Your child may be offered something to numb the area of the poke.
- Put a needle into the vein. The needle may cause some pressure or discomfort. It may help to have your child look the other way or distract your child by talking about something else. The needle will hurt less if your child stays very still.
- Attach test tubes to the needle. These tubes will fill up with blood. Up to 10 tubes may be filled. Blood collecting in the tube is magnified so it may look like a lot of blood has been taken out.
- Remove the needle and put a piece of gauze on that spot. The gauze will stop any bleeding that might occur.
- A bandage may be put over the site where the needle went in to the vein. It can be taken off after the bleeding stops.

It may seem like a lot of blood, but the lab staff will never draw more blood than your child's body can easily replace in a short period of time.

What happens after the test?

Your child can go back to normal activities.

The results of the tests may not be ready for several days. Some test results can take a few weeks. Once the results are in, the doctor should contact you.

Your child may be tender or sore in the area where the blood samples were taken. A small amount of bruising may also occur.

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any concerns or if your child has special health care needs not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.