

# Preparing Your Child for a Blood Draw

*Tips for reducing anxiety and increasing cooperation*



# Helping Your Child Cope During a Blood Draw

Blood draws can cause anxiety in children of all ages and developmental levels. Feeling prepared can reduce stress and anxiety about a blood draw. Use this booklet when you talk to your child about what to expect and how you can support them before the procedure.

## When should I talk to my child?

The amount of preparation depends on your child's age and developmental level.

- **Younger children** do best with short, simple explanations closer to the time of the procedure.
- **Older children** may benefit from more time to prepare.

For example, you may tell a toddler as you are walking into the visit. A school-age child may benefit from advance notice a day or two before, so they can process and ask questions.

## How to help your child cope:

Children benefit from having a sense of control. Here are some choices you can suggest to them during the procedure:



Watch or look away.



Hold someone's hand, squeeze a stress ball, or hug a stuffed animal.



Listen to a song or play the game "I spy."



Take deep breaths or count to 10.

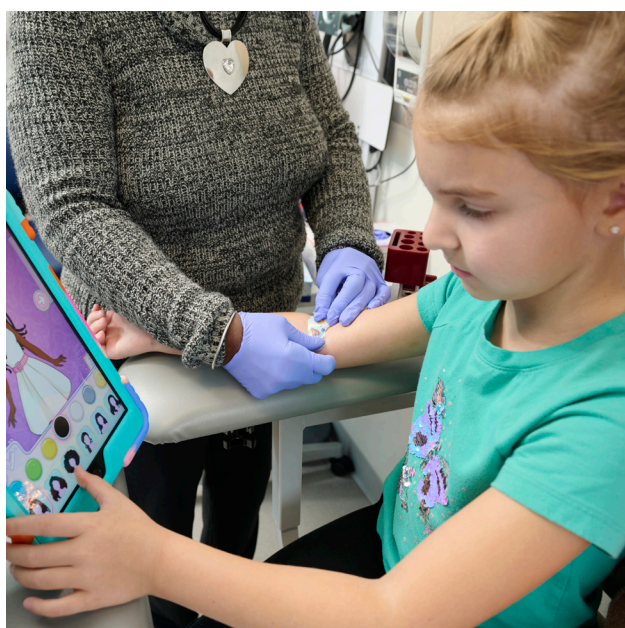


Placing the child in a comfortable position can also be helpful during a blood draw.



### **Back to tummy**

The child sits on the caregiver's lap with their back to the caregiver's chest. The caregiver will wrap their arms around the child. The phlebotomist may ask the caregiver to gently hold the child's arm still.



### **On their own**

This position is good for older children who can remain still on their own but still may need comfort. A caregiver can sit on the opposite side of where the blood draw is happening and hold the patient's hand for extra support, if they need it.

## How to explain a blood draw to your child

A blood draw (also known as a test or labs) is when the doctor needs a small amount of your blood today to learn more about how your body is doing. For your blood draw, you can sit by yourself, or a grown up may also sit with you. The most important job you have today is sitting very still and taking slow, easy breaths.

1



2



A team member called a phlebotomist will look at the blue lines on your arms and hands. These are called veins. They will place a tight band around your arm to see your veins better.



**Did you know?** A phlebotomist is the person who will help make you feel comfortable, collect your blood, and send it to the lab.

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The phlebotomist will clean your skin with an alcohol wipe. This wipe is very small and will feel cold and wet on your skin.



**Why do we use an alcohol wipe?** Using an alcohol wipe helps to get rid of any germs that might be on your skin.

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The phlebotomist will place a small needle in your vein to take some blood. This may feel like a quick poke or pinch. Taking slow, easy breaths during this part can be helpful.



*Some patients like to count or sing a song during their blood draws. **What would you like to do?***

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When the correct amount of blood is taken, the phlebotomist will gently remove the needle. When the needle comes out, you will hear a clicking sound. The phlebotomist will then put a bandage on the area.



***What kind of bandages do you have at home?  
Do they have any cool designs?***

## **Important note:**

Children feed off the energy of their caregivers and look to them in times of stress. As the caregiver, it is important to stay calm and supportive. This can help your child feel more at ease and creates an environment where they feel safe and secure. Here are some phrases you can say to soothe your child.

*“It is OK to cry, just remember to hold still and take some slow and easy breaths.”*

*“It is OK to feel scared. I am here and you are safe.”*

*“You did a great job taking those deep breaths and holding still.”*

These are all great examples of providing a supportive environment for your child and redirecting them when they feel stressed or anxious.



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