

## Helping Your Child Prepare for a Lab Appointment

Parents play a vital role in making the pediatric patient's lab experience a positive one. Here are a few ways that you can help make the blood collection process easier for both you and your child.

### **Let your child know what to expect.**

Some parents wonder if they should keep the blood draw a secret or not. Usually, it's best to let your child know a day or two before they will have blood drawn. Your child will be able to prepare themselves ahead of time and ask you questions. You will also have the opportunity to reassure your child that the test is necessary and develop a coping plan together.

### **Choose the right words when explaining the process to your child.**

- Every child is different, so the length of time to complete the blood draw will vary. The whole process usually takes 5 to 10 minutes.
- Your child will sit in a big chair with an armrest to lean on. If your child is small, the phlebotomist might have you sit in the chair and have your child sit in your lap.
- The phlebotomist will put a big rubber band on your child's arm. The band will feel tight like someone is squeezing their arm.
- The phlebotomist will clean your child's arm with alcohol. The alcohol might smell funny and will feel cold on their skin.
- The phlebotomist will put a needle in their vein. Your child might feel a pinch or a prick that stings (similar to a mosquito bite), or they might not feel anything at all. It will be more comfortable if your child sits still. Don't tell your child that it's a painless process or that they won't feel anything as this can be misleading.
- Tubes will be attached to the needle and the tubes will fill up with blood. Sometimes, it might seem like a lot of blood is being taken, but the phlebotomist will never draw more blood than your child's body can easily replace in a short period of time.
- The needle will be taken out and a piece of gauze will be placed on your child's arm. The phlebotomist will probably ask you to hold pressure on the gauze. Holding pressure on the gauze will help your child stop bleeding and prevent or lessen bruising at the draw site.

- The phlebotomist will put a bandage on your child's arm. The bandage can be taken off after your child stops bleeding, usually within 20 minutes after the blood draw.

**Come prepared.**

- If your child's doctor didn't tell you they were faxing a paper order, or sending an electronic lab order, bring your child's printed lab order. Bring the parent or guardian's photo ID and your child's current insurance card.
- Confirm with your child's doctor if your child needs to do the following:
  - Fast the day before/ morning of your visit
  - Drink more or less water than usual
  - Avoid certain medications, vitamin or herbal supplements
- Follow all instructions that you were given by your child's doctor. Unless you were told not to by the doctor, make sure that your child drinks plenty of water the day before and day of their blood draw. If your child does not have to fast, make sure they eat prior to coming to the Patient Service Center lab.
- Your child can wear normal clothes the day of the blood draw.
- Although both parents or guardians and siblings might come to the Patient Service Center lab, only one parent or guardian can come into the exam room for the blood draw. All other family members should remain in the waiting room; please note that accompanying children must be supervised at all times while they are in the waiting room. Please plan ahead.

**Talk to the phlebotomist prior to the start of the procedure.**

- Follow all instructions given by the phlebotomist and be patient with them.
- Talk to the phlebotomist about the best position for your child (i.e. should your child sit in your lap, sit the chair alone, or lie down).
- Ask if another staff member is available to help support your child's hand or arm. This will allow you to focus on comforting your child.
- If you will not be holding your child during the blood draw, it is fine to stay near your child to provide comfort. Check with the phlebotomist that you will not be in the way.

- Try not to show any negative emotions regarding the blood draw. Your child might mirror what they see. If you are worried or fearful, this could influence your child, and they might become worried or fearful. If you appear relaxed and calm, this could influence your child to feel the same.

**Distract your child from watching the needle.**

Watching the needle can distress some children; distraction is usually helpful for any child, of any age.

<b>12 months to 2 years:</b>	<b>3 to 5 years:</b>	<b>6 to 12 years:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Let your child watch you blow bubbles</li> <li>• Bring toys that move or make noise</li> <li>• Sing a song to your child</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Let your child watch you blow bubbles</li> <li>• Bring toys that move or make noise</li> <li>• Let your child hold their favorite stuffed animal or toy</li> <li>• Sing a song together</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Let your child watch a video on your phone</li> <li>• Look at a “search and find” book</li> <li>• Let your child hold their favorite stuffed animal or toy</li> <li>• Have your child blow bubbles</li> <li>• Have your child close their eyes and image their favorite place or activity</li> <li>• Tell your child a joke or story</li> </ul>