



Helping Your Child Cope with Blood Draws

You have an important role in helping your child cope and there are some things you can do to make the process easier:

Stay calm

This will help your child feel that everything is okay and it will help him/her be as calm as possible. When you are calm, it will be easier to focus on your child's needs.

Prepare your child

The best way to prepare young children is through play and simple explanations. When children are prepared, they are more cooperative and recover quickly. Before the procedure:

- Tell your child the reason for the procedure. For example, "to help you get better" or "to stay healthy."
- Tell your child what the steps are and how it will feel. If you are not familiar with what will happen, the staff will be happy to explain the steps to you. It's helpful to use a stuffed toy to show your child the steps and help them know what to expect. The toy can go with your child to the appointment and be a source of comfort.
- Be honest about pain. For example, "some kids say it feels like a little pinch, but it's over quickly."
- Tell your child how to help. For example, "you can help by holding still and breathing deeply with me." Practice counting to 3 and blowing the feeling away. The slow blowing helps keep veins full, which makes blood easier to draw.
- Offer lots of liquids (water, juice, etc.) the day before. Also, make sure your child is warm when getting blood drawn. Warm, full veins are easier to find.
- Make a plan together. This will help your child feel a sense of control. Have your child bring their plan of what will help with them to share with the staff. For example:
 - *I want my mom or dad with me for my blood draw.*
 - *I am going to bring my teddy bear to hold to help me feel calm.*
 - *My job is to hold myself still like a statue.*

Distract your child

Taking your child's attention away from the procedure can be effective for children of all ages. Discuss what will be helpful with your child ahead of time. Some ideas include:

- Infants: Use a soothing voice; wrap the infant in a favorite blanket. Pacifiers can also be helpful.
- Toddlers/Preschoolers: Sound books, sing or count. Have your child take slow deep breaths by using bubbles or a pinwheel.
- School-age children: *I Spy*, sound books, a squeeze ball or sing.
- Teens: *I Spy*, music, talk about favorite activities, people or vacation spots.
- If your child prefers to watch, you might tell a story, sing or count.

Provide physical comfort

Have a young child sit on your lap. The staff can show you how hug comfortably and help your child to stay still. With older children, hold hands or offer to rub their arm before and during the blood draw.

Praise

- After the procedure, give your child a lot of praise for being successful in making it through the experience.

Please call 904.202.8147 if you have questions or need additional information.