



# Having a blood test?

## Information for parents/carers or older children

Children are often required to have a blood test as part of their hospital treatment. This information explains the process of having a blood test so that you and your child know what to expect!

Many children and their parents might feel anxious at the thought of having a blood test. Most children will pick up on their parent's reactions to stressful situations so it helps if you are able to remain calm and relaxed to show your child it is okay.

If you feel that your own anxiety is overwhelming, then it may be better to have to bring someone else with you to stay with them during the procedure.

### **Before the procedure**

Give your child simple and honest information about the procedure. Talk in a quiet and calm voice.

**Don't** promise your child that the procedure will not hurt. You could explain the procedure by using words such as 'small scratch' 'pinch' or 'hurt a little'.

Decide with your child which distraction method you may want to use during the procedure. This could be a book, games on a mobile phone, a favourite toy or some bubbles.

When available, numbing cream or cold spray may be offered to you however research has shown that using relaxation and distraction techniques are very helpful when taking blood.

If the consultant gave you the blood form, please make sure you bring it with you. This is very important, we cannot do the blood test without it.

Please make sure the child is nice and warm and well hydrated before attending the appointment.

### **Can my child eat and drink?**

It is very important that your child is well hydrated for at least 2 hours before the appointment and can eat as normal. If you have been advised that your child needs fasting bloods, your child cannot eat anything for at least 10-12 hours before the appointment, they can drink clear water. Your child can take prescribed medication. **NO** chewing gum, mints, cough drops or cough medicine.

### **How is the blood sample taken?**

---

It may be a good idea to talk to your child before the procedure and ask them if they would like to:

---

- Sit on your lap and give you a hug
  - Sit on their own and hold your hand
  - Count to three
  - Watch the blood test/or not watch
  - Play on your phone
  - Sing a song
  - Squeeze a stress ball
  - Look at a book
  - Play some music
  - Watch some sensory lights
-



Depending on the child's age they will be asked to sit on their own or they can sit on your lap so you can hold your child during the procedure. One of the nursing staff will hold the child's arm. A feed can be offered to babies unless, as stated, it is a fasting blood sample that is needed.

Once your child's details have been checked, the staff will look in the crook of the elbow and the back of the hand to find a suitable vein and a pink band (called a tourniquet) **may** be wrapped around your child's arm or wrist. This can help the staff to find a vein and makes it easier for them to insert the needle and take the sample, this may be slightly uncomfortable.



One of the nursing staff will hold the child's arm tightly when the procedure is being done. This is essential to ensure that when the needle is in, the arm doesn't move and cause any damage to the surrounding tissue.

As soon as enough blood has been taken, the needle will be taken out and pressure will be applied to the area with some gauze. This will help to reduce any bruising that may occur at the needle site and then a plaster can be applied if your child has no identified plaster allergies.

Depending on the accessibility of the veins and how much blood is required, it may take more than one attempt to get the full blood sample.

Children may cry during the procedure, this is normal and let them know it is okay for them to feel upset. They may still have a bruise at the needle site. You can reassure them that will be okay afterwards.

### **After the procedure**

Give your child lots of praise. The staff may offer a sticker and/or present afterwards as a reward.

It may also help to do something nice or offer a treat!

The blood sample will be sent to the laboratory. Some tests can take longer than others, all results go back to your consultant or Doctor who will contact you if necessary.

If you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to contact the venue you are attending:

St Woolos Children's Outpatients Department 01633 656028/658742

Serennu Children's Centre 01633 748016

Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr Children's Outpatient Department 01433 802609

### **Useful online videos**

<http://www.Kidshealth.org/en/kids/video-bldtest.html>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BiXMntMtCOU>

### **References**

Alder Hey's Children's NHS (2016) Pain Service: Tips for helping your child when they are having a procedure [online] *Alder Hey's Children's NHS* [Viewed 17<sup>th</sup> July 2019] Available from:

[https://alderhey.nhs.uk/application/files/8515/0211/2976/Procedures\\_Tips\\_for\\_helping\\_your\\_child\\_when\\_they\\_are\\_having\\_a\\_procedure.pdf](https://alderhey.nhs.uk/application/files/8515/0211/2976/Procedures_Tips_for_helping_your_child_when_they_are_having_a_procedure.pdf)

NHS Foundation Trust (2017) What Happens when my child has a blood test? [online] *Birmingham's Women's and Children's NHS Foundation Trust* [Viewed 17<sup>th</sup> July 2019] Available from: <https://bwc.nhs.uk/download.cfm?doc=docm93jijm4n1034>

Southampton Children's Hospital (2015) Having a blood test or cannula [online] *Southampton's Children's Hospital* [Viewed 17<sup>th</sup> July 2019] Available from: <http://www.uhs.nhs.uk/Media/ControlledDocuments/Patientinformation/Childhealth/Having-a-blood-test-or-cannula.pdf>