

FACTSHEET

This fact sheet is for education purposes only. Please consult with your doctor or other health professionals to make sure this information is right for your child. If you would like to provide feedback on this fact sheet, please visit: www.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/parents-and-carers/fact-sheets/feedback-form.

Blood tests - Venepuncture

Venepuncture is a way of obtaining blood for a blood test.

Why does my child need it?

Your doctor will explain why this test is needed. Many different tests can only be done this way.

What happens?

If it is possible to delay the test the doctor or nurse or pathologist may put a cream on that will numb the skin after a while, this helps to reduce any pain. If it is important to do the test straight away then the cream cannot be used as it will delay taking the test. A tourniquet (elastic belt) is put around your child's arm. It is pulled quite tight, and this can be upsetting for a young child. Cotton wool can be placed under the clasp, to make it feel more comfortable. Your child will need to be still while the skin is cleaned and a small needle is put into a vein and taken out as soon as a small amount of blood has been taken. Taking blood does not usually take very long, but can be upsetting for children. In small children, and those who are very young or very chubby, veins may be hard to find.

The needle will need to be done again:

- if a vein can't be found,
- if not enough blood can be obtained,
- if the child moves and the needle prematurely comes out of the vein.

There may be a little bruising and soreness where the needle goes in, this usually clears up quickly.

Can I help my child?

Staying with your child while the blood is taken can help comfort them, if you cannot stay with your child then a staff member will stay instead.

If your child asks about the tests being done, reassure them and explain in simple terms what is being done and why. Always tell the truth.

It is helpful to distract your infant or child by cuddling, telling stories, singing or playing with a toy or game. You can help your child to sit on their own or on your lap, or lie down, which ever they prefer. Remain calm and comfort your child, if you get upset so will your child. Remember some children need to watch. Always praise your child afterwards. The staff are there to help you and your child. If your child is very anxious, it may be beneficial to elicit the support of Child Life Therapy – who may have ideas and strategies that can help.

Remember:

- The doctor will explain why this test is needed.
- There may be a little soreness and bruising where the needle entered, this usually settles rapidly.
- Stay with your child to comfort them.
- Child Life Therapy assistance is available at John Hunter Children's Hospital on 4985 5410, Randwick on 9382 6984 and Westmead on 9845 2669.