

Family Education Sheet

Preparing Your Child for a Blood Draw



Boston Children's Hospital

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Blood draws can be hard for children of all ages and developmental levels. Children can find it hard because of things like fear of needles and/or pain, having to wait before the blood draw, the tightness of the tourniquet and the feeling of alcohol swabs and Band-Aids. This family education sheet gives suggestions to help make your child's blood draw go as smoothly as possible.

Key points

- You can bring things from home to comfort and distract your child.
- Child life specialists can help you plan for the procedure.
- Numbing cream can help with pain.

When should I start getting my child ready?

What to tell your child about their blood draw, and when, depends on your child's developmental needs, anxiety level and what you think is best for them.



- You can start by telling them why they need the blood draw. If they've been having any physical symptoms, this can be a great place to start.
- You can use the resources below a few days before the blood draw if it will help your child to prepare and rehearse ahead of time.
- You can wait until you're in the hospital or waiting area of the lab to talk about the blood draw if knowing ahead of time will make your child more anxious.

Do what you think is most helpful for your child and reach out to their healthcare provider or child life specialist for any help you need.

Are there resources to prepare my child?

- It might help to give your child an idea about what to expect during the blood draw. There is a My Hospital Story about coming to the hospital for a blood draw. You can find this story by going to the website below.
 - Boston Children's, Longwood Campus:
childrenshospital.org/patient-resources/you-arrive/your-visit/my-hospital-story
- You can ask a child life specialist for first/then boards, a checklist of steps, visual schedules, practice blood draw kits and other resources. Please call **(617) 355-6551** to ask about these resources and to



see if a child life specialist is available during your child's blood draw. They can give you general resources and personalized resources based on your child's needs.

What can I do to make this procedure easier for my child?

- Some medications can help with needle pain. Some of these are creams or patches to numb the skin.
You'll need to plan before your visit and get a prescription before your appointment if you want to use these. Talk to your child's doctor or nurse to find out more.



Note: A bandage is placed over these medications when they're used. The feeling of taking off the bandage is sometimes more upsetting for children with sensory sensitivities than the actual blood draw.

- Some of the names of these numbing medications are:
 - L.M.X.-4 (this is the preferred cream)
 - EMLA cream
 - Synera patch
- Request Buzzy, a small vibration device that helps with pain.
- Help your child feel like they have some control over the situation by giving them choices when possible.
 - Try saying, "You can sit on your own or sit here with me."
 - Try asking, "Which arm should we check first?" "Would you like us to count down?"
- Give your child positive reinforcement (say positive things and compliment them) during the blood draw. You can say, "You're doing really well," or "I like the way you're keeping your body still."
- Bring comforting items and/or helpful distraction toys to meet your child's needs (like a special stuffed animal, fidget toy or tablet with a favorite app or video).
- Bring rewards and treats that can help your child cooperate. Something new and exciting can help them feel better about completing the blood draw.

- Talk with the staff about your child's needs. Do they need a short waiting time? Is it better for only 1 person to speak at a time? Let them know what they can do to be ready for your child and able to accommodate your child's needs.

How can Boston Children's help my child?

Our main goal is to make sure that your child is safe and feels comfortable. Contact child life services if you know that your child needs a blood draw, and you want support before and/or during the appointment.



Child life specialists have plans for helping children of all ages and different kinds of needs deal with challenges in the medical environment.

Please call **(617) 355-6551** to see if a child life specialist is available for your child's blood draw at your location. If someone isn't available, tell the person at the front desk when you check in that your child may have challenges. This will allow the staff to help your child as much as possible.

What is a patient support plan?

A patient support plan lets our staff know about your child's needs and preferences. This helps them work with your child in future medical appointments and procedures. Please talk with your child's physician or a child life specialist if a patient support plan would help your child.

