

Family Education Sheet

Preparing Your Child for a Blood Draw



Boston Children's Hospital

View more health education materials at
www.bostonchildrens.org/familyeducation

Blood draws can be hard for children of all ages and developmental levels. Challenges can include things like being in the waiting room, having a tourniquet, and/or feeling 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

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

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 using the resources below a few days before the blood draw if preparation and rehearsal ahead of time helps your child.
- You can wait until you're in the hospital or waiting area of the lab if knowing about the blood draw ahead of time will make your child more anxious.

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

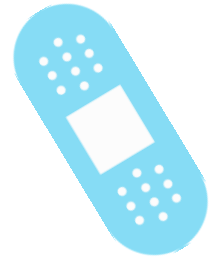
Are there resources to prepare my child?



- You can find My Hospital Story downloads about many different areas and procedures within Boston Children's Hospital. There is a My Hospital Story about coming to the hospital for blood work. It might help give your child an idea about what to expect at the blood draw. You can find this story and many others by going to the website below and following the steps that are listed.
 - Boston Children's, Longwood Campus (for boys): <http://bit.ly/bloodtestboy> (PDF)
 - Boston Children's, Longwood Campus (for girls): <http://bit.ly/bloodtestgirl> (PDF)
- You can also visit myhospitalstory.org to see other stories.

- You can ask your child life specialist for first/then boards, a checklist of steps, visual schedules, and other resources. Please call 617-355-6551 to ask about these resources and to see if a child life specialist is available for your child's blood draw. They can provide general resources as well as personalized resources that are 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 include creams or patches to numb the skin. You will need to plan before your visit and get a prescription 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:

- EMLA cream
- Synera patch
- L.M.X.-4
- 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 do you want to use?" "Would you like us to count down?"
- Give your child positive reinforcement (say positive things and compliment them) throughout the blood draw. You can say, "You're doing really well," or "I like the way you're holding nice and 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. Does your child 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 will need a blood draw, and you want support before and 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 behavior support plan?

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

