

The Role of the Parents

We encourage parents to be present during the blood collection procedure only if fainting or other physical reactions to blood by the parent(s) will not interfere with the procedure.

Parents can help prepare the child—if they are old enough to understand—about the blood collection procedure. It does hurt momentarily but reassure them that you and the phlebotomist are there to help them feel better.

While your child will feel momentary pain/discomfort they are usually most frightened by being held by “strangers” and unable to understand what to expect.

Blood Collection Methods

Just like adults, infants and children often need a laboratory test to assist their physician in diagnosing their condition. When a blood test is required, the blood can be collected by either venipuncture or skin puncture.

Venipuncture

Venipuncture is the procedure used to collect blood from a vein. Taking blood from a vein in an infant or child is no different from the technique used for adults. A tourniquet is used to select a vein, the skin is cleansed, and a needle is used to puncture the skin.

The first challenge in collecting blood is holding the child’s arm and body still enough so that the vein can be accessed and the child will not harm themselves by “tugging” at the needle. Collecting blood from children takes two people: one to hold the child in a special arm hold and one to collect the blood specimen.

Parents who wish to be present during the procedure can often be most helpful by standing near the child’s head and providing comfort.

Venipuncture yields more accurate test results for most laboratory tests. There are some tests that can only be collected by venipuncture.

The Skin Puncture Procedure

If skin puncture is an option for the necessary testing, the heel, toe or fingertip are common sites. Normally the area is warmed with a warm washcloth or diaper so that circulation to the area is increased creating a better blood flow. The skin will be cleansed and then punctured with a sharp lancet creating a small opening for blood to flow out and into specialized containers.

The trick for skin punctures is to hold the child and still be able to direct the blood flow into a container. Sometimes this technique requires a second individual to assist with holding the child during the blood collection.

Recollection of a Blood Specimen or Unsuccessful Collection

Unfortunately there are times when a blood specimen needs to be recollected or a second attempt at a vein or skin collection needs to occur. Blood is a living tissue that is fragile and subject to damage with difficult collections. Sometimes, even in the best of circumstances, damage occurs to the blood cells or the blood “clots” before it is mixed with an appropriate anticoagulant.

In the event that we need additional blood specimen from your infant or child, we will contact you as soon as possible.