My Texas Children’s Journey

What to Expect at Your Blood Draw at Texas Children’s

A Social Story to Prepare Patients and Families for Visits
Before the Visit

• **Discuss what will happen during the visit** by using words and pictures your child can understand.

• **Avoid focusing on the unpleasant or painful parts of the visit** as this may cause everyone to feel more anxious.

• **Create a Blood Draw Plan.** This involves considering what you will bring to the visit to help your child communicate and feel comfortable. This might include a blanket, headphones, sunglasses, a tablet, a stuffed animal, or other small toys. It might be helpful to bring some rewards for your child for being brave and following instructions during their blood draw. It might also involve thinking about what to share with the medical staff for the visit to go as smoothly as possible.

• **Stay hydrated.** Drinking water ahead of time will make it easier to complete the blood draw. Consult your child’s doctor to see if your child can drink other liquids besides water, or if they need to be fasting.

• **Bring and use visual supports.** Your child may benefit from reading a Social Story or seeing a list of all the steps involved in a blood draw.

• **Request Child Life.** Child life specialists are available to help prepare children, teenagers, and young adults for medical treatments and procedures. To request a child life specialist, please make your request when checking-in to the lab or at least 48 business hours in advance via phone or email: 832-826-1650 or childlife@texaschildrens.org.
During the Visit

• **Share your suggestions** with medical staff.
• **Remain calm and reassuring.** Controlling your expressions and emotions will help your child do the same.
• **Be honest but use gentle language.** If your child asks, say it may hurt. You could describe a needle for a blood draw as a “strong pinch.” It is better to prepare your child than to say it will not hurt if it could hurt.
• **Use simple, direct language** to explain what is happening.
• **Acknowledge feelings** but avoid long conversations and avoid using words like “scared” or “worried.”
• Help your child understand medical **staff are helpers.**
• When possible, **provide choices** to help your child feel more in control. For example, let your child pick where to sit, the color of a bandage, or a reward to follow the visit.
• **Praise your child’s** brave behavior and ability to complete the visit.
A note for parents/caregivers:

Some children and teenagers benefit from having a written or picture-based guide for situations that are new or not part of their regular routine. A Social Story can be a helpful tool to provide a reasonable overview about an upcoming situation or event so that children and teenagers know what to expect. Some families may find it helpful to read the story with their child a few days prior to the visit. Others may find it more helpful to read it the morning of the visit or on the way to the visit.

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Today I am going to Texas Children’s to get my blood checked to learn about what my body needs.
We drive to the hospital!

I might get dropped off, someone might help my family park our car, or we may drive under the building to park our car ourselves.
Inside the hospital, I go to the **welcome desk** to make sure we know where to go.
I may ride the elevator to get to the 3rd Floor.
The 3rd floor can be really busy. There can be a lot of people walking around and it might be noisy. It is a good idea to stay near my family.
I visit the registration desk by the elevators to let the lab know that I am here and ready to have my blood checked.
I then visit the lab front desk. This is a good time to let the staff know what I need for my Blood Draw Plan (see page 35).
I now have to wait for someone to call my name. The waiting area can be busy and a bit noisy. I should stay with my family.

Waiting can be really hard. That’s why I brought some of my favorite things!
They called my name! I now go to the room and meet my phlebotomist (fluh·baa·tuh·muhst), also known as a Collector. The Collector is the person that is trained to check my blood. They are super nice and good at their job.
When I meet the Collector, I should **remind** them about my Blood Draw Plan and ask them any questions that I may have.

There may also be another person in the room, like a **Child Life Specialist**.
While I wait for my blood to be checked, my family may talk to me or play with me.
My family will let the Collector know the best position for having my blood checked. I may sit on my family’s lap, sit by myself and hold my family’s hand, or I might be asked to lay down.
My family will now roll up my sleeve. The Collector will wrap a blue rubber band around my arm. It will feel like a tight squeeze.

This step is very important because it helps the Collector see my veins really well.
The Collector might use a cool machine called the Accuvein to find the best spot on my arm to check my blood and make the process go as fast as possible. It will shine like a flashlight and might take a few minutes.
I can always request “Buzzy”, which is a device that looks like a ladybug or bee. It makes a buzzing sound and vibrating sensation in the spot where they check my blood, also known as the blood draw site. It might be loud and surprise me, or it might feel funny and make me laugh!
The Collector will **clean** my skin with a wipe. It will feel cold and wet and might sting a little bit.
It will be important to keep my body and my arm very still.

I can do other things with my other hand like hold my family’s hand, hold a toy, play a game or watch a show.
The Collector holds my arm and uses a tiny tube to hold my blood.

The Collector will put a tiny needle into my arm, and I will feel a tiny poke and see the tube fill up with some of my blood.

If I don’t want to look at the tube, I can look away or close my eyes.
My other choices:

I can take **deep breaths**.

I can **sing songs**.

I can **talk** to my parents.

I can **play a game**.

I can **watch a video**.
The Collector will then wrap my arm with a colored wrap. I get to pick the color! I might feel a tiny squeeze on my arm once the wrap is on my arm.
I stayed with my family!

I held out my arm and was so brave!

I picked the color of my arm wrap!

Everyone is so proud of me!

I get to pick a sticker!
It’s time to leave!

I say goodbye to everyone!
Please complete a brief survey to let us know about your experience using this social story!

Or visit https://redcap.link/TCHsocialstory

Once you finish the survey, please continue clicking for additional resources
Tools to Help Your Child Prepare for a Blood Draw
POSITIONING FOR COMFORT

OUR PHILOSOPHY - Allows the child to STAND UP whenever possible since it is LESS THREATENING than forcing the child to lie down, thus decreasing the child's anxiety and increasing cooperation. These positioning techniques empower the caregiver to provide a comfortable and supportive environment for the child.

POINTS TO CONSIDER:

- SIZE of child and caregiver to allow maximum comfort and comfort
- IMMobilIZATION of arms and extremities in a supportive, non-threatening manner
- ACCESS to the procedure site
- CHILD'S PERSPECTIVE
  - Use soft, non-threatening words (pats, snuggles, hug, vs. hold you down)
  - Support positive coping by allowing child to watch, look away, engage in distraction activities (singing, breathing or distraction toys)
- ENVIRONMENT - Patient furniture to ensure immobilization

- Infant IM
- Infant IV/Blood Draw
- Infant NG Tube Placement
- IM - Chest to Chest in Lap
- IM - Chest to Chest on Bed
- IV/Blood Draw - Front Facing
- Older Patient IV/Blood Draw
- NG Tube Placement
- Foley Catheter Placement

This above-positioning technique has been evaluated and successfully utilized by health care professionals at Texas Children's Hospital. The safety of the patient, caregiver, and health care personnel is of utmost concern. It is important to use your clinical judgment when choosing an appropriate position.
Your child may already be familiar with using a visual schedule at school or even at home. A visual schedule can help prepare children for new or unfamiliar situations, such as a blood draw. Visual schedules can be a checklist going down a page or even a sequence of pictures, like the one below.
A First-Then board provides a visual for the child that once they participate in a non-preferred task, such as a blood draw, they will be able to do a more preferred task afterwards, such as playing with cars. During blood draws, a First-Then board can help motivate your child to take part in an activity that is not enjoyable by clarifying that a preferred activity will occur after it is over.
Distraction/Relaxation Techniques

• When children think about going to the doctor, they may become worried about the visit. You can help by teaching your child simple relaxation techniques. Distraction may help by taking your child’s mind off stressful events, thoughts, or emotions and putting attention on positive thoughts or activities.

• Techniques include:

  • **Deep breathing**: Teach your child to take a deep breath, hold the breath for a few seconds and then release it. For young children, using a pinwheel or bubbles to practice can help them focus on their breathing and distract from their stress.

  • **Muscle tensing/relaxing**: Have your child relax by focusing on different muscles of the body and tensing and relaxing them one at a time.

  • **Visualization**: Encourage your child to imagine something pleasant and to visualize that scene with eyes closed. Suggest thinking about smells, sounds, and touch of what is imagined. Using pictures or objects to remind your child of favorite places or activities can help this strategy be more successful.

  • **Favorite toys/activities/books**: Involve your child in distracting activities before the procedure begins and, if possible, before your child begins to become upset. Use a favorite toy, a particularly engaging topic of conversation, or a game that does not require movement.
Practice to Help Prepare for Visit

• Practicing medical procedures in familiar places, such as home or school, help children understand what to expect and help promote cooperation.

• Families are encouraged to pretend to give a stuffed animal or doll a blood draw. Families should have their child pick a comfort item, distraction technique, or play item to practice with the doll or animal.

• Once the family is done pretending to give a blood draw, the child should choose a reward such as a sticker or special activity to complete after the blood draw is over.
Video of Daniel Tiger Getting a Blood Draw

Visit: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kiyx4UaCWTI
# My Blood Draw Plan

Think about everything you need to help you have a successful blood draw. Make a plan ahead of time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To help prepare me for the visit, I will:</th>
<th>To help me communicate during the visit, I will:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>______________________________________</td>
<td>____________________________________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To help me feel comfortable during the visit, I will bring my:</th>
<th>Before the Blood Draw, I will tell the Collector:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>______________________________________</td>
<td>____________________________________________</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>During the Blood Draw, I can:</th>
<th>When the Blood Draw is over, I can:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>_____________________________</td>
<td>_________________________________</td>
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