

How to prepare and what to bring

Help children ages 3 and up prepare before appointment.

- Tell what choices they will have and make a coping plan (see below).
- Talk to your child about the test.
You could say something like: There will be a small pinch to get some blood. The blood tells the doctor important information about your body. While they are getting the blood, we can play with the tablet.
- **Watch this video with your child to help prepare:** <https://childrenswi.org/medical-care/laboratory-services>
- **Bring comfort items, toys, or activities from home to use during the blood draw**
 - For younger children: blanket, stuffed animal, book, toys.
 - For older children and teens: toys, fidget item, stress ball or squish, tablet or phone.

Here are some questions you can ask the person who is drawing the blood

- Are there ways to manage my child's pain today? (like numbing spray)
- Can my child sit in my lap?
- Do you have any toys or books my child can play with to distract them?

My Blood Draw Coping Plan

Where to sit:

- By myself on chair
- On caregiver's lap

What to do:

- Play with toy, tablet, or phone
- Squeeze stress ball or hand
- Count or sing
- Listen to music
- Take deep breaths
- Hold comfort item (blanket, stuffed animal)

Where to look:

- Watch blood draw
- Look away by myself
- Use a book to block my view

What I want to hear:

- People talking to me
- Quiet, no talking
- Caregiver or family talking only
- Countdown before poke
- Don't count down
- Tell me every step
- Just do it while I play

Returning to lab after a hard time with a blood draw

Use medical play at home. Children often don't have words to express big feelings. Help your child to "play out" their experience. Have them pretend to draw your blood. They can also use a stuffed animal or other toy. This can help you find out what they understand and how they feel about their blood draw.

Help them prepare before the next blood test. Use the coping plan above to pick what works best for the next blood draw. You can decide when the best time to do this is. You know your child best.

Confirm your child's feelings. Let them know they can tell you if it was scary or it may have hurt. Your child's feelings are real. A helpful phrase is: "It's okay to be afraid, but I know you can do hard things."

Talk about why the blood is needed. Explain that getting it done is not a choice. A simple way to explain it: "Your blood tells the doctors how the inside of your body is working."

Then talk about choices that your child CAN make. This can include: sitting by themselves or with a caregiver, which band aid they want, what they play with, and maybe an incentive after the test is done.

Think about ways to manage the pain

- Numb the pain.
 - Ask the lab staff if they have the spray to numb the area.
 - Place ice packs before blood draw.
 - Ask your doctor about using EMLA on blood draw sites 30 minutes **before** getting to the lab.
- Hold a vibrating device, like Buzzy, where the blood will be drawn. Vibrations block pain during a blood draw, shot, or IV.
- Use ShotBlocker. This tool uses firm bumps to overwhelm the senses around where a poke will be to confuse the brain. This lessens the pain.



Buzzy and ShotBlocker may be found at CW Milwaukee campus, CW labs in New Berlin, Mequon, Kenosha, and Delafield. Or you may bring your own. They may be found online.

- Ask to have tourniquet ("tight band") put over shirt or paper towel.
- Have your child take deep breaths and keep their arm still and relaxed.
- **Ask for a Child Life Specialist** when at Children's Milwaukee campus. They can create a coping plan, offer support and provide distraction during the blood draw.

For more health and wellness information check out these resources:

- <https://kidshealth.org/ChildrensWi/en/parents/blood-test-types.html?ref=search>
- <https://kidshealth.org/ChildrensWi/en/parents>

This sheet was created to help you care for your child or family member. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment and follow-up.