

Bring something for your child to play with.

- Children may find it hard to cope when their blood is being taken, especially the first time. If your child has a favourite stuffed animal to squeeze or a song to sing, this may help to distract them. A toy, tablet, or a cell phone can work, too.
- If you do not have something for your child to play with, find something in the room for them to focus on (like a picture or a poster) and talk about.
- Ask your child to breathe deeply, all the way down in their belly. This can help them relax, and give them something else to think about.

Use comfort hold techniques.

- These positions can help you hold your child during their blood collection. They will help your child to feel safe while also helping to keep their arm still.
- Be sure to hold your child until the health care provider tells you they are finished.

Back-to-chest



Place your child on your lap, facing away from you. Place their arm over or under your arm.

Chest-to-chest



Place your child on your lap, facing towards you. Place their arm over or under your arm.

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Blood Collection Tips for Children

Pathology and
Laboratory Medicine

Tell the truth.

- Tell your child they are going to have a blood test. Give your child time to understand what this means.

Help your child get ready.

- Explain what is going to happen:
 - › You could say, “*Sometimes doctors need blood to find out how your body is working.*”
 - › Tell your child where they will be going.
 - › Let them know that you will stay with them.
- Tell them what the health care provider is going to do:
 - › They will place a rubber band on your child’s arm. It will be tight, but it will help them find your child’s veins.
 - › They will clean a small spot on their arm with a little pad. This will make it feel cool.
 - › They will use a thin needle. It might cause a bit of pain, like a pinch.

It is important to stay very still.

Some Nova Scotia Health blood collection sites do not collect blood from people under 12 years old. For more information, visit: www.nshealth.ca/blood-collection

Answer any questions they may have.

- Your child will likely be curious about what is going to happen. Take the time to answer their questions. For example:
 - › “*Will it hurt?*”
 - › “*How much blood will they take?*”
 - › “*What if there isn’t enough blood left after?*”

Make sure your child has enough fluids.

- It is easier to collect blood from someone who is well hydrated (has enough fluids in their body). Even if your child must fast (not eat) before their test, they can drink water.

Give your child a sense of control.

- Ask them to make choices, like picking a toy or book to bring, or a snack to have after.
- Let them watch while the health care provider takes their blood, if they want to. Not letting your child watch can make their fear worse. Letting them watch takes away the mystery and shows them that it is not that bad.

Stay positive.

- Try to be cheerful about the process.
- Take care not to let your child know about any bad feelings you may have about the test. **Do not** tell your child about any bad blood collection experiences you may have had.
- You may feel more anxious than your child. If so, consider sending your child with someone else (like a spouse, a grandparent, or another trusted person).

Work with the health care team.

- Being friendly with the health care team will help your child feel more relaxed.
- If your child has had a bad blood collection experience in the past, or has a history of fainting, tell a member of the health care team.
- You may be asked to hold your child, keep their arm still, offer comfort, or distract them.