



1 Things I need to know before I have a blood test

Venepuncture is a mildly invasive procedure that involves puncturing a vein to obtain blood and is not without risk. It is common to have a small amount of bruising after the procedure. This is normal and should resolve after a few days. However, if the area becomes red or swollen seek advice from your GP.

Occasionally the arm may have a large area of bruising. This is usually due to insufficient pressure having been applied once the needle has been removed or through damage to the vein when the needle has been inserted due to fragile veins. Although this can be painful, it usually resolves itself within a few days. Patients taking anticoagulants will bruise more easily.

Another complication of the procedure can be tendon or nerve damage, when access to the vein has been compromised. Please advise the phlebotomist if you feel any exceptional pain at the time of needle insertion as the procedure will be stopped immediately. Medical advice may be required as damage to nerves and tendons can take weeks to resolve.

2 Things I need to do

- Tell the person taking your blood sample if you take any medication that thins the blood (such as Warfarin or Aspirin)
- Advise the phlebotomist if you have experienced difficulty in obtaining blood previously, if you are afraid of needles or the sight of blood or if you have felt faint or actually fainted when having blood tests previously
- Say if you have a preference for which arm is used
- Keep your arm straight throughout the procedure and immediately afterwards
- State immediately if you feel intense pain or burning or if you feel faint at any stage of the procedure
- Apply pressure to the puncture site and keep the pressure applied for 20 – 30 minutes & keep the dressing on for at least one hour



3 How will my sample be taken?

- You will be asked to sit in a chair and expose the inner side of the elbow.
- You will be asked to confirm your name, date of birth and address. It is important that the phlebotomist confirms your identity. However, if you are a carer/parent of the person who requires the blood test you may be asked to confirm their details, if they are unable to do so themselves
- The phlebotomist will examine your arms to see if you have a suitable vein from which they can obtain the sample
- A tight band called a tourniquet will be put around the upper part of the arm. This temporarily slows the blood flow and causes the vein to swell so that the sample can be obtained
- The phlebotomist will cleanse their hands and apply gloves.
- The skin area is then cleansed with an alcohol based wipe to reduce the risk of infection and allowed to dry
- As the needle is inserted you should feel a slight pricking or stinging feeling. It may be that more than one bottle will be required, however only one needle will be inserted if the procedure is problem free
- When all the samples are obtained, the needle is removed and a gauze pad is applied with a little pressure to stop the bleeding and to prevent bruising. Your arm should be kept straight whilst the pressure is applied. Bending the arm can cause bruising. The phlebotomist may ask you to apply the pressure whilst they transfer your details onto the sample bottles before they are sent to the laboratory
- The phlebotomist will check the site again and apply tape over the gauze dressing which must be kept in place for an hour before you remove it.

4 Getting your results

Please call 5 days after your blood test to check that your results are back and to see if any further action is required.