

GIVING BLOOD MORE EASILY FACTSHEET

Being told you need a blood test can cause some of you worry and anxiety, especially given the difficulty you may have had with blood tests in the past. Read the Trust's advice and tips below to try and make this an easier, less-stressful experience.

Q What can I do to prepare if I'm told I need a blood test?

A If your doctor decides you need to have blood taken, and this has been difficult for you in the past, explain the problem to them and give them our letter for health professionals.

If they still think it's necessary to take blood from you, asking for the most experienced person to carry out the procedure will make it easier for you.

This could be:

- The most experienced person in the practice; health care assistant, nurse or doctor
- A phlebotomist (a person whose job it is to take blood)
- The children's unit in the hospital, where staff are used to taking blood from patients who find it difficult or distressing
- An anaesthetist

Q Where on the body can blood be taken from?

- A**
- As well as from the arm, blood can be taken from the hands, feet or legs and even from the groin or neck if necessary
 - To help the person taking the blood 'see' the vessels in trickier areas, they may want to use ultrasound (a painless scan), which may need to be arranged in advance
 - Alternatively, if you live in the UK, the clinic or GP surgery can borrow the Trust's Vein Viewer – a hand-held device using near infra-red light. This can help pinpoint an appropriate vein to take blood from. Some hospitals also now have Vein Viewers.
 - The Trust also own an 'Airglove'. This is a double-layered plastic glove in which you can insert a limb - either an arm or leg. Warm air circulates in the glove and gently warms the limb making the veins easier to find and take blood from. Like the vein-viewer, this can be loaned to UK beneficiaries. Contact the Health and Wellbeing team at the Trust if you'd like more information.

Q How can I help the person taking blood?

A When you meet the person who is going to take your blood, you can help by:

- Wrapping up warm if it's a cold day – it's important that your limbs are warm when you have blood taken
- Making sure you have had plenty of water to drink - veins are more difficult to find if you are dehydrated
- Suggesting places where it has been easy to take blood before
- Explaining how blood was taken in previous tests

There might be a better place (site) to take blood from, though, and the person taking the blood will explain this to you before continuing. But do say so, if you know that the places they're suggesting won't work.

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Some doctors will give you an anaesthetic cream to numb your skin if you would like one. You can also buy it over the counter from the pharmacist. Your doctor or pharmacist will explain exactly when and how to apply it.

You'll need to arrange it before you go to have your blood taken, as it has to be applied beforehand. It can be applied to more than one area.

Q Can they use a special needle to help?

A To minimise any discomfort, the person taking your blood may use a children's or 'paediatric' needle; or a small needle attached to a thin flexible tube called a butterfly needle. They may also use paediatric containers which take smaller amounts of blood.

Q What else should I consider when I need blood taken?

A Remember, healthcare professionals will understand any concerns you may have about having blood taken, so tell them. If you find it hard to talk about, write it down for them to read during your consultation.

If your doctor is considering prescribing new medication for you, which could involve regular blood monitoring by blood test, remind them of your problem as there may be an alternative medication that could be prescribed instead.

Top Tips

- Explain any problems you have with having blood taken to your doctor
- Decide with your doctor who will take your blood
- Ask for or buy an anaesthetic cream if you'd like to use one - it can be used in more than one place
- Help the person taking our blood choose the best site to take if from
- Discuss the type of needles that might be used before the first attempt
- Make sure you are warm on the day
- Make sure you are well hydrated
- Ask for medicines which don't need monitoring by blood tests