Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Your Child Needs a Blood Test

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Your Child Needs a Blood Test

Patient Information

Children’s Community Nursing Team

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Introduction

Every child reacts differently to having a blood test. Some may be curious and interested, while others may feel worried or upset.

Children with sensory needs may find the new feelings that come with a blood test uncomfortable or distressing.

We understand that blood tests can be stressful for both children and their care givers. The ideas below can help you support your child and make the experience easier for both of you.

Before the test

Preparing your child ahead of time can make the blood test go more smoothly. This is especially important if your child feels anxious, or may need blood tests in the future.

For neurodiverse children for example a child with autism, early preparation can help them get used to the steps of a blood test, so they know what to expect on the day.

If you told us about your child’s neurodiversity or specific needs when booking, we may be able to make adjustments. These could include a longer appointment, or the first appointment of the day to reduce waiting time.

Fasting information

If fasting is required prior to the blood test, your child's GP or referrer will advise you how long they should fast for. Please inform staff of this when booking the appointment

Ways to prepare your child

Explain why the blood test is needed.
Talking about it 1–2 days before the appointment works well for most children. Use simple, clear language -

- for a 5-year-old: "Blood helps keep our bodies healthy. The doctor wants to check your blood to make sure it's doing its job properly."

- for an 8-year-old: "Your tummy has been hurting. The doctor wants to look at your blood to help find out what might be causing it."

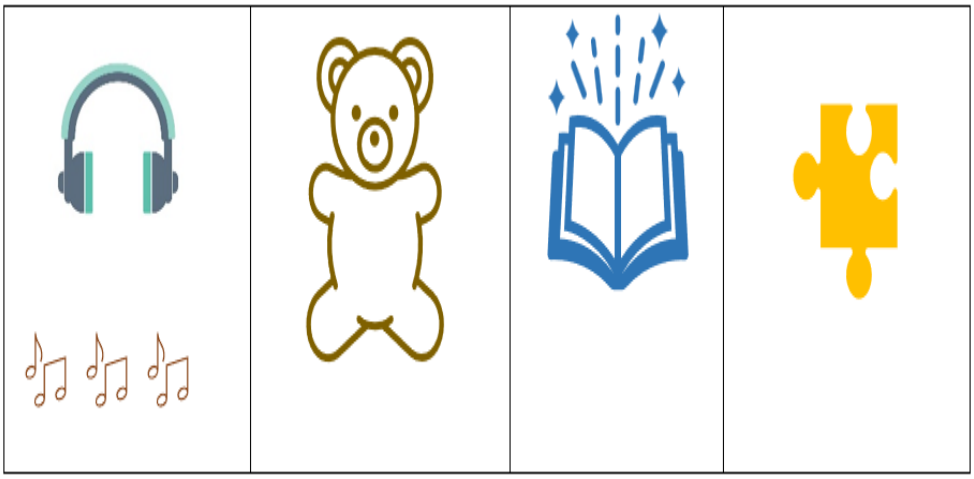
Explain what will happen during the blood test.
Knowing the steps can help reduce worry. If possible, use pictures or a simple visual schedule to show the order of events.

Here is a visual schedule you can use to help your child understand what will happen at a blood test appointment.

			
Numbing cream	Arrive at clinic	Meet Nurse	Place arm comfortably
			
Band around top of your arm	A sharp scratch which will be over quickly	A plaster	A small reward or special activity

1. Use your child's favourite teddy or doll to show how a blood test works. Let your child watch while you pretend to do the test on the toy, then encourage them to have a turn.

2. Work with your child to choose ways to help them stay calm. Giving them simple choices can help them feel more in control and less worried. For example -



- what they would like to bring from home to help them feel comfortable
- whether they want to look away or watch during the blood test
- how they want you to support them (for example, holding their hand, talking to them, or sitting on your lap)

3. Think together about a **small treat** or activity your child would enjoy after the blood test, such as watching a film or having their favourite meal.

4. Encourage your child to **drink water** and **stay warm** before the test. This can help the nurse find a vein more easily.

5. Ask your child how they are feeling about the blood test. If they seem worried, you can ask the healthcare team for extra support.

6. Take a moment to notice how **you** are feeling too. Think about what might help you stay calm during this time.

Children often copy how their parents or carers react. If you stay calm, it can help your child feel calmer too.



Using Numbing Cream

Numbing cream can help reduce the discomfort of a blood test. We recommend using it for children who need a blood test.

You can get numbing cream (such as EMLA) from your child's GP on prescription, or buy it from a pharmacy.

How to apply the cream

One hour before the appointment:

- Put a small amount of cream on the inside crease of your child's arm. You don't need to rub it in.
- Cover the cream with cling film so it stays in place.
- If you have extra cream, you can also put some on the back of each hand and cover with cling film in the same way.

- The nurse will remove the cream when you arrive at the clinic.



Please seek medical advice from your GP if you or your child experiences any sensation or reaction to the numbing cream.

There are other numbing options, such as numbing spray, which is used just before the test. We cannot provide this in our clinics.

If your child prefers the spray, or cannot use EMLA cream, you can ask your GP for a prescription. Please note that **you** will need to apply the spray, as clinic staff cannot give medication.

PLEASE REMEMBER TO BRING YOUR CHILD'S BLOOD TEST FORM TO THE APPOINTMENT.

If you do not have the form with you, we won't be able to do the blood test, and you will need to book another appointment.

To book a blood test, please telephone 0300 707 7700.

During the test

Spend a little time thinking about what might help to distract your child. You can use these distractions in the waiting room and during the blood test.

Here are some helpful ideas:

- play a simple game, like “I spy” or a memory game
- count together
- watch something on a phone or tablet
- listen to their favourite music
- play a game on a mobile phone or tablet

After the test

Let your child know you noticed how hard they tried, no matter how the appointment went.

If your child may need another blood test in the future, think about what went well and what didn’t. Consider what you might do differently next time.



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