

Having blood taken Phlebotomy

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You have attended today to have blood samples collected, usually at the request of our doctor.

The procedure

To take the blood samples, our trained phlebotomists will insert a needle into one of your veins. This is usually in the front of your arm, where it bends at the elbow.

The samples are then drawn into special vacuum tubes. Usually only one or two tubes, or about three teaspoons of blood are required, this can be more if complex investigations are required.

It is very important these samples are obtained in order for your doctor to make decisions about your treatment.

Does it hurt?

The phlebotomist will try to ensure the procedure is as painless as possible, but it is not uncommon to experience some discomfort during the procedure.

You may feel pain when the needle is inserted, whilst the vein is located or whilst the sample is drawn. The amount of pain each patient experiences can vary from patient to patient and can depend on various factors.

One of the most important things you can do to reduce pain is to relax and not be tense during the procedure.

If you find the procedure too uncomfortable, tell the phlebotomist and they will stop, until you are ready to try again.

Usually the phlebotomist will obtain the blood samples on the first attempt, sometimes this isn't possible and repeated attempts are required. The phlebotomist will attempt to obtain the samples no more than twice, if they are unable to obtain the sample in two attempts they will either, request a colleague attempts to obtain the sample or you can ask for the sample not to be taken.

After the procedure

Once the procedure has been completed, a roll of cotton or gauze will be applied to the puncture site by the phlebotomist.

Please ensure you apply firm pressure to the puncture site for at least two or three minutes after the procedure. Once the phlebotomist is happy any bleeding has stopped they will either tape the cotton in place or apply a plaster.

If you do not apply sufficient pressure, or sufficient pressure for long enough, it is likely that you will develop more extensive bruising over the next few days. This is particularly the case if you have an increased risk of bleeding due to medications, such as warfarin, aspirin or clopidogrel, or a medical condition such as liver disease or Cushing's syndrome.

Information for Patients

After the procedure it is very unusual to suffer any major complications. The most common are bruising around the puncture site and some localised residual pain/ discomfort.

You can reduce the likelihood of excessive bruising by ensuring you apply firm pressure to the puncture site for at least two minutes after the procedure. You should also avoid any heavy lifting or strenuous exercise for a day or two.

If you do develop any swelling at the puncture site, even after applying firm pressure for two or three minutes, continue to apply direct firm pressure to the puncture site for a few minutes more. If you develop any residual pain or bruising in the hours after the procedure, this can be treated with simple pain killers such as paracetamol and the application of ice packs to the puncture site. Do not apply ice or frozen items directly to the skin.

If bruising does develop this can take days or even weeks to disappear, depending on the severity.

Any pain should settle in a day or two, but if it continues, or you are concerned you should speak to your GP.

The results of your tests will be sent to the doctor who requested them and are usually available within a few days.

Important

Try to relax. If you are relaxed it is much less likely that the procedure will be uncomfortable or unsuccessful on the first attempt.

If you find the procedure too uncomfortable, tell the phlebotomist. They will stop until you are ready to try again or you can choose not to have the tests.

After the procedure, apply firm pressure to the puncture site for at least two or three minutes preferably longer.

Avoid any heavy lifting or strenuous exercise for a day or two following the procedure. If you have pain after the procedure, take simple pain killers like paracetamol.

Apply ice packs to reduce any significant bruising and swelling.

If you have any concerns, about your condition, then you should contact NHS **111** Or seek medical advice.

Health talks

The Trust provides free monthly health talks on a variety of medical conditions and treatments. For more information visit www.uhb.nhs.uk/health-talks or call **01213714323**

Phlebotomy

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