

# HELPING BABIES WITH BLOOD WORK IN THE LAB

Often, caregivers do not expect to be bringing their infant to the lab for blood work. The staff in the lab are here to help you through this experience. We want you and your child to develop a positive relationship with the health care team.

Due to many factors, babies will often cry with blood work. Occasionally it is necessary to poke a baby more than once as their veins are very small. Bruising can be a common side effect. Evidence shows that the more a parent knows about what to expect and is versed in pain management strategies, the calmer they are. A child, no matter their age, will cope best with a calm, confident caregiver.

## BEFORE COMING TO THE LAB

Check in with yourself, how do you feel about needles? It is common for people to not like needles or hospitals. Additionally, it can be hard for parents to watch their infant get blood work. Your baby can be sensitive to any anxiety you are feeling, so it is important to take care of yourself first. If you are feeling uneasy or worried, ask another person to come with you.

## POSITIONING



### Positioning for **Venous collections (blood draw from arm):**

When taking blood from a baby's arm, you will notice the collector will ask you to put your baby on the bed. This will ensure their arm is supported, still and straight during the blood draw. You are welcome to be at the head of the bed to provide your child comfort. Allow the baby to see your face. You can gently rub their cheek or forehead. For older infants, position your second hand over their torso, second arm and legs to ensure they don't wiggle too much.



### Positioning for **Heel pokes:**

For heel pokes, a caregiver can cradle the baby in their arms. Skin-to-skin contact can be offered depending on caregiver's comfort.

You may feel more comfortable having the baby on the bed. The staff will help you know where to stand.

# ADDRESSING PAIN AND COMFORT



## FEEDING



For Heel Pokes, **BREAST / CHEST** or **BOTTLE FEEDING** can be a good way to address pain and comfort. You can start at least 2 minutes before the poke and continue throughout the collection. The collector will help you find the right position so they can access your baby's heel. Continue to feed your baby as per their interest throughout the draw.

## SELF-SOOTHING for Venous Draw

Babies soothe themselves through their **sucking reflex**. You can use a clean finger or a pacifier to help them self-soothe. Dipping the soother or finger in expressed breast milk or formula two minutes before the draw can also provide some relief through the **sweet taste**. Continue this during and after the draw as your child allows.



## NUMBING CREAM

You might like to talk to your health care team about topical **NUMBING CREAM** for your infant's **venous** blood draw. There are a few different brands available at most pharmacies.

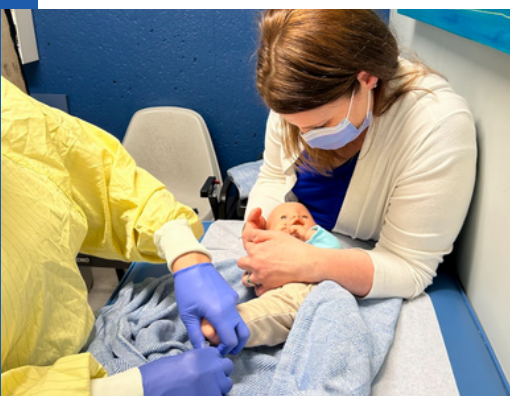
- Full term infants or older can use EMLA
- Full term infants one month or older can use Ametop
- For preterm infants, please ask your physician

For blood work, the cream should be placed on the inside of both elbows. Watch this video for more instruction. Please note, bandages on a baby's skin are a choking hazard and should be supervised by an adult.

## DISTRACTION AND SINGING

The cadence and tone of a caregiver's voice can be calming for an infant. Having a caregiver sing a familiar song in a soft relaxed voice can give the child something to focus on. Make eye contact and smile to let them know they are safe.

You are welcome to bring a book, soother or a favorite toy for distraction. A favorite blanket can be placed on the bed for added familiarity and warmth.



This resource was prepared by the child life specialists at BC Children's Hospital out patient lab. **Website:** <http://www.bcchildrens.ca/our-services/support-services/child-life#Resources>