

FAQs about Pediatric Pokes in Outpatient Lab at American Family Children's Hospital

We always want to give the safest, quickest, and most child-friendly blood drawing services in our outpatient lab. Every child who needs blood drawn should go to the lab. A phlebotomist looks at both arms to feel and find a vein to poke. They are highly trained in drawing blood in children.

How the Phlebotomist Finds a Vein

The phlebotomist will look first then feel. A stretchy band is placed at the top of the arm to make the veins easy to feel. It feels like a tight squeeze and may pinch your arm skin a little bit. If the phlebotomist can feel a vein, the skin is cleaned with an alcohol wipe and then a needle is poked in the skin (into the vein). The feeling is like a “pinch” when the needle first breaks the skin. Buzzy Bee or numbing cream can help make that feeling much less. Once there is blood in the tubing, the tech starts to fill a syringe or different tubes. Filling the tubes usually takes less than a minute. The phlebotomist only takes a small sample of blood. Deep breathing, relaxing, and counting can help while waiting. When the tubes are filled, the phlebotomist will loosen the orange rubber band. After the needle is removed, a small piece of gauze is held to the arm and a band-aid is placed.

Why the Needle Can Miss a Vein

Veins are tubes that move blood inside the body. Sometimes they roll away from the needle. The vein can also fall down on itself

when it is poked. It will go back to normal once the needle is removed. Sometimes, veins move under the skin, the phlebotomist may move the needle a little to try and get into the vein. These small movements **are not** extra pokes and should not cause extra pain.

Health Conditions May Make it Hard to See and Feel Veins

Sometimes a person can have a health condition which makes it hard for blood to be drawn. If the phlebotomist does not get any blood on the first try, they might try once more, or decide that the veins are too deep or hard to poke and may ask for help. Please do not be afraid to ask any questions during this time. If you get more than one poke every time you get blood drawn, ask your provider or clinic nurse about other options.

Will it always be hard to get blood from my veins?

Growing bigger can make veins move closer to the surface and easier to feel. Drinking a lot of healthy fluids can also make veins easier to feel. Most people have their blood drawn with one poke as they get older. It is a good idea for children to have the phlebotomist look at both arms at every blood draw. They rarely poke a person if a vein can't be felt. Ask as many questions as you need to during any blood draw.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 6/2023. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#7824