Capillary Blood Sampling

Information for parents and/or caregivers

What is Capillary Blood Sampling?

Capillary blood sampling is a way of obtaining a blood sample for testing. It is sometimes referred to as a "finger prick" or a "heel prick". The finger or heel is pricked with a small handheld device (lancet) which has an in built needle to prick the skin. The blood is collected into small tubes and sent to the laboratory (lab) for tests.

- Heel prick technique is used in children under the age of 6 months
- Finger prick technique is used in children over the age of 6 months.

Why do we need to do capillary blood sampling?

Sometimes doctors will need to take a blood sample to help them find out what maybe causing your child's illness.

What should I expect?

Your child's hand or foot will be warmed by applying a warm face washer to the site.

Once the heel or finger prick is done, some children may feel it as a small prickle sensation and say "ouch". Other children may say it hurts and become tearful.

How can I help my child?

While the blood sample is being collected, you can hold your child close to provide comfort and support. Staff will advise you on the best way to hold and comfort your child. Talking in a calm, encouraging way and trying to distract your child may help to reduce any anxiety about getting a finger or heel prick.

Using distraction techniques such as looking at a book or reading a story, looking and talking about the colourful pictures on the wall, singing or blowing bubbles can be very successful.

Children up to the age of 6 months can be given sucrose orally (sugary syrup) immediately before blood collection. Sucrose gives a form of pain relief to your child. Please ask your doctor or nurse for more information.

May I stay with my child?

Yes, we encourage parents/caregivers to cuddle their child during the collection process. It gives the child a sense of safety and security. If you cannot stay with your child a member of staff will hold your child.

Can all blood test be done by capillary sampling?

It depends on the amount of blood that is required for testing. We can take up to 2mls of blood from a capillary collection. If the doctors require more blood than this for tests, then the sample will need to be collected from a vein. Some blood tests can only be taken from a vein.

What happens after blood sampling?

When the capillary blood sample has been collected, firm pressure will be applied to your child's heel or finger to stop the bleeding. A band aid can be applied to the site, then lots of hugs, praise and special treats if required. Ask your nurse or doctor – we give these out with pleasure.

For more information

Paediatric Unit
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Flinders Drive
Bedford Park SA 5042

Telephone: 08 8204 5511
www.sahealth.sa.gov.au

If you require this information in an alternative language or format please contact SA Health on the details provided and they will make every effort to assist you.

Interpreter

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