Homework to Prepare for Blood Work

Use practice, praise, and play to help your child feel more comfortable with blood work.

Practice these steps when your child is in a happy mood. Try to work on the steps a little every day for multiple days or weeks.

First Steps
- Talk about how nice the people at the hospital are.
- If you have a photo preparation book or video, review it with your child daily, starting a week before the appointment.
- Practice sitting still. Play Simon Says and have your child hold one arm out and then keep it still. Praise your child for holding still.
- Practice cleaning the skin in the middle of the inside of the arm and on the back of your child’s hand. Use a cool, wet tissue with water first. Then, if you have rubbing alcohol at home, practice with it. Talk about the special smell in a positive way.
- Practice wrapping a ribbon or a piece of elastic loosely around your child’s arm.

Next Steps
- Pretend to give a blood draw to a doll or stuffed animal.
  - Remind the doll that it is important to hold very still. Have your child choose something fun (such as a book or toy) for the doll to look at during the procedure.
  - Tie the band around the doll’s arm and say, “I am putting this band on your arm – you will feel a squeeze.”
  - Use a wet tissue to practice cleaning the skin in the middle of the inside of the doll’s arm and the back the doll’s hand.
  - Practice a blood draw with dental floss or string. Say to the doll, “I’m getting a blood draw with this tiny tubing while you look at this toy.”
  - Place a band-aid on the doll’s arm.
  - Let your child choose a reward for the doll such as praise, a sticker, or a treat.
- Repeat practicing these play steps with another adult as the patient.
Have Your Child Play the Patient

- Give your child a break between each step.
- Praise your child for being calm and cooperative. If necessary, use a reward system for cooperative behavior.
- If your child tries to push your hands away, redirect your child’s hands with a fun activity. For example, tell your child to “Hold your toy car” or “Tap your knee” during a favorite song.
- These steps should challenge your child, but if your child becomes upset, take a break and try again later.

Teaming up with a Therapist

If a therapist works with your child, ask him or her to work on this homework with your child too.

Coping Skills

While preparing for blood work and during the blood draw, encourage your child to use coping skills. Coping skills can be used in any situation that is difficult for your child.

Let your child know these are ways to calm the body and feel better. Choose a coping or relaxation method that you think your child will respond to best:

- **Deep breathing** - Have your child take 3-5 deep breaths. Encourage your child to watch his or her stomach rise and fall. Blow bubbles or blow into a pinwheel to encourage deep breathing.

- **Counting** - Count to 10 with your child and encourage participation.

- **Pressure** - Have your child squeeze both hands together or around a ball. Repeat five times.

- **Music** - Play soothing music for your child to listen to.

- **Videos** - Encourage your child to watch a favorite video to remain calm.

- **Picturing a favorite place or activity** - Describe in detail your child’s favorite activity or place and ask your child to imagine it.