

Laboratory Patient Safety Tips: Blood Specimen Collection (Venipuncture)

Is there any information that would be helpful to share with the laboratory professional before they collect my blood specimen?

To help assure your safety, if any of these apply to you, share appropriate information with the professional who will be collecting your blood before the procedure is performed:

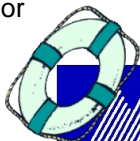
- Previous problems associated with a blood specimen collection (fainting, pain lasting several days, bruising or swelling at the site)
- Currently on medication that may cause prolonged bleeding (i.e. chemotherapy, blood thinners – Coumadin (warfarin), heparin, or aspirin therapy)
- Specific draw sites that have been successful in the past.
- Previous mastectomy or axillary lymph node dissection
- Arterial-Venous fistula

What should I watch for after the procedure?

A common complication from venipuncture is bruising (hematoma). This occurs when blood leaks out of the blood vessel into the surrounding tissue. This may cause the site to swell and be painful.

Aren't I safe when the bleeding stops?

It may appear the bleeding has stopped on the skin within a minute or two, but the clotting process requires more time to complete.



What if I am on a blood thinner (anticoagulant)?

If you take a prescribed medication commonly known as blood thinners, such as Coumadin (warfarin), are undergoing cancer treatment, or have some other bleeding disorder, pressure may need to be applied longer.

What can I do to avoid complications?

To help avoid complications, such as getting a bruise after a blood draw, apply direct pressure to the site for 3 to 5 minutes immediately after the needle is removed.

Do not just bend the arm to apply the required pressure as this does not apply enough direct pressure to the actual site.

If a bruise does occur, use general first aid; ice the area and avoid use of the arm. If the area that is bruised causes pain and it does not subside with appropriate first aid measures, seek further medical attention from a healthcare provider.

Should I avoid activities?

You should avoid leaning on or using the arm that the blood was drawn from for exercise or heavy lifting for a few hours to prevent dislodging of the fibrin clot that formed to stop the bleeding.

Reference: Galena, Harold J., "Complications occurring from diagnostic venipuncture", Journal of Family Practice, May 1992.

Your Safety and Service Experience Are Important To Us!

Questions or concerns on your laboratory service? Contact:

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