Child Life Teaching Sheets: Blood Draw (sometimes called a Lab Draw)

Child Life’s goal is to promote positive experiences for children and their families in the health care setting. This teaching sheet is designed to introduce the steps of a blood draw at American Family Children’s Hospital.

What is a blood draw?
A blood draw is a procedure ordered by your doctor. During the procedure a small amount of blood is taken from your vein (the blue lines in your hands, arms, or feet) in order to check your blood or how your body is working.

What will I see and feel?

**Tourniquet**
A tourniquet looks like a long, orange rubber band and is used to help see your veins better. It will feel like a tight squeeze on your arm.

**Soap**
During a blood draw, we make sure that everything is very clean. A small area of your skin will be washed with a special soap wipe. Some kids think the soap smells. It will feel cold and wet.

**Butterfly Needle, Syringe, and Test Tube**
1. This is a **butterfly needle**. The green parts on each side of the yellow tube look like butterfly wings and help the medical staff hold the needle carefully. These butterfly needles are used just for kids. Some kids say they feel a little pinch when it goes in.

2. A **syringe** is connected to the small plastic straw at the end of the butterfly needle. The syringe is used to collect the blood. The medical staff will only take a little bit of blood. Your body is always making new blood!

3. The **tube** (or vial) with the purple cap is where your blood goes to keep it safe from germs. The tube will be sent to another room where your blood can be checked.

**Dressing**
Once the blood draw is done, the medical staff will put a white cloth called gauze on your arm and make sure it stays in place with a Band-Aid or some soft white tape.
**Practice Ideas for Home**

Sit in your favorite chair and have someone time you for three minutes to see if you can stay still. While you are sitting there, try and think of a place that makes you happy, or you can practice taking deep breaths like you’re blowing out birthday candles.

**Caregivers should ask about:**

**Pain control:**
- **EMLA or LMX** - a topical numbing cream that can reduce the sensation of the blood draw. Ask your child’s provider for a prescription that can be picked up at your pharmacy prior to their blood draw, or request it from a nurse or doctor during your clinic appointment at AFCH before going to the lab area.
  *The cream needs be on the skin for about 20 minutes to be most effective. Numbing cream prescriptions picked up from the pharmacy may take a few minutes longer. Follow instructions provided.*

  **BUZZY Bee®** - uses vibrations to provide natural pain relief. Ask your phlebotomist to use this during your child’s blood draw.

**Comfort positioning:** Ways you can hold your child to reduce stress and promote the caregiver-child connection.

**Child Life Specialist:** Individuals who prepare you and your child for the procedure and can provide distraction and calming supports during the blood draw. You can request child life services when you check-in for lab.

**Distraction:** Often provided by Child Life Specialists, but can be done by caregivers. You can use books, toys or any other comfort item to take your child’s attention away from procedure.

Children take cues from their caregivers, so it is helpful to remain calm.

For additional ideas or support during a blood draw, please call Child Life at (608) 890-7888. You may also ask staff to page a Child Life Specialist (if available).