

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

Having a blood test at home

What is a blood test?

Blood tests are part of many routine medical examinations. They are used for patients both inside and outside of the hospital to:

- Diagnose conditions/diseases
- See how well treatments are working
- Ensure that treatments are not harming them.

How is my blood taken?

The phlebotomist (person taking your blood) will explain the procedure to you before your blood is taken.

During a blood test, a small amount of blood is taken from the most suitable vein using a thin needle. The blood tubes contain small amounts of chemicals that preserve the blood.

A finger prick may also be used for some tests. The procedure is usually quick and easy, although it may cause short-term discomfort and in some cases can require more than one attempt. Although it may seem like a lot of blood is being taken, the amount is usually small.

Once the sample has been collected, the phlebotomist will ask you to apply pressure to the needle entry site for 40 to 60 seconds to allow any bleeding to stop.

An appropriate dressing will then be applied to the site. You or your carer should remove the dressing 20 to 30 minutes after it has been applied.

What happens to my blood?

Scientists working within the laboratory receive the blood and analyse it. They use either whole blood to count blood cells, or they separate the blood cells from the fluid that contains them. This fluid is called plasma or serum. The fluid is used to measure different substances in the blood.

Since there are many different blood tests available, the blood is only tested for a range of likely conditions or diseases which are specified by the doctor who has requested them. The results of the tests are then sent back to the requesting doctor.

Not all of the blood will be used during this process and the remaining blood is usually kept for a few days in case it is needed again. After this time the tube containing the remaining blood is incinerated.

What happens if I become unwell after a blood test?

For the vast majority of people the process of giving a blood sample is a very simple and trouble-free experience. However, there are certain issues that you should be aware of:

Bruises

Bruises may occasionally develop after giving blood, due to blood leaking from the vein into the tissues of the arm. You should apply firm pressure to the area and raise your arm up for two minutes. Avoid heavy lifting for at least two hours after giving blood as this will minimise the chance of bruises occurring. Most bruises are small and fade within a few days. On occasions the bruising may worsen and become painful. If this happens you should contact your GP.

Fainting

A few people feel faint during or after giving blood. If this happens, please tell the person who is taking your blood immediately. Staff are fully trained to take care of you and will make sure that someone is with you until you are feeling well again.

Smoking and alcohol

After giving blood it is advisable not to smoke for at least an hour. If you do, the effect of the nicotine can make you feel a little unwell. We also advise you to drink plenty of non-alcoholic fluids.

Please speak to the person taking your blood or contact your GP if you have any concerns.

Further sources of information

NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/conditions

Our website: www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk

Patient Experience Team (PET)

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

King's Mill Hospital: 01623 672222

Newark Hospital: 01636 685692

Email: sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you.

External websites may be referred to in specific cases. Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them.

If you require a full list of references for this leaflet, please email sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net or telephone 01623 622515, extension 6927.

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