

Having a Blood Test

Why am I having a blood test?

Your doctor has asked for some blood samples to be taken so that tests can be performed.

The doctor can use these test results to:

- help diagnose your condition
- monitor your progress
- check your immunity to certain diseases
- determine your blood group in case you need a blood transfusion

If you are pregnant your blood will regularly be tested to monitor your health, and the health of your unborn baby.

Are there any special preparations?

There are usually no special preparations needed prior to a blood test. However, it may be necessary to fast (go without food or drink, except water) before certain blood tests. If you need to take medication that is supposed to be taken with food, please consult the doctor or nurse who asked for the tests; they will explain how you should prepare.

Where will I have this procedure?

You may have your blood sample taken in your GP surgery, in an outpatients department, or while you are an inpatient in hospital.

If you are not an inpatient your doctor will inform you where and when to attend for your blood test. Some blood tests must be taken at a particular time of the day.

What is going to happen?

The person taking your blood sample will have been trained in the procedure and may be a doctor, nurse or phlebotomist (a phlebotomist is a person trained in blood sample collection).

They will ask you to take off your coat and roll up long sleeves to expose the inside of your elbow.

A band called a tourniquet will be wrapped quite tightly around your arm, above the point where the blood is to be taken, to allow the veins to fill.

A needle is then placed under the skin into a vein. Usually only one needle puncture will be required to obtain all the blood samples required.

Your blood will be collected into one or more bottles, depending on how many tests need to be performed. These bottles will be labelled with your details and sent to the appropriate laboratory within the Pathology department for testing.

When all the samples have been collected the needle is removed from your arm and a cotton wool ball is pressed on the puncture site until the vein stops bleeding (usually within a minute or two).

A sticking plaster is then put over the site to prevent blood spotting your clothes. You can remove the plaster after 30 minutes.

Will it hurt?

Usually the needle puncture causes almost no pain. If you are nervous, keeping your arm relaxed and looking away can help.

Are there any risks or side effects?

Sometimes a small bruise may appear in the area where the needle was inserted.

Some people may feel faint during a blood test, especially if they are fearful of needles, but this is rare. If you feel at all unwell, please tell the person taking the sample.

On rare occasions the area where the needle was inserted may become red or swollen and very rarely, a nerve can be damaged during the procedure. In the majority of cases this resolves quickly; if this happens, please consult your GP.

If you are taking anticoagulants or anti-platelet drugs, e.g. warfarin, heparin, Clopidogrel, or certain herbal remedies, it may take a few minutes longer than normal for your vein to stop bleeding. The Phlebotomist will ensure that the bleeding has stopped before you leave. If you experience any further bleeding contact your GP.

If you are allergic to sticking plasters please tell the person taking your sample.

When will the results be ready?

The length of time between the blood sample being taken and your doctor receiving the results can vary greatly and is affected by the urgency and complexity of the test.

You will be contacted when your results are ready, or you will be told when and who to phone in order to arrange an appointment to discuss your results. Your doctor or nurse will explain the results to you.

Who has access to your pathology results?

Hospital doctors have access to all of your pathology results, whether the tests have been requested in the hospital, in an outpatient clinic or by your GP. This will give your GP a full history of your pathology results reducing the need for unnecessary repeat tests and providing improved continuity of care.

Any questions?

Your doctor can answer any questions you may have regarding the type of blood test that was ordered.

If you have access to the internet you can find detailed descriptions of tests and how they are used in healthcare on:

Lab Tests Online www.labtestsonline.org.uk

(Website developed by professionals who work in clinical laboratories and approved by the Department of Health)

MTW NHS Trust is committed to making its patient information accessible in a range of languages and formats. If you need this leaflet in another language or format please ask one of your clinical care team or the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). We will do our best to arrange this.

Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust welcomes all forms of feedback from our service users. If the standard of service you have received from the Trust does not meet your expectations, we want to hear from you. Please speak with the ward manager or the nurse in charge in the first instance, or you can contact the **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)** on:

Telephone: ☎ 01622 224960 or ☎ 01892 632953

Email: mtw-tr.palsoffice@nhs.net

or visit their office at either Maidstone or Tunbridge Wells Hospital between 9.00am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

You can be confident that your care will not be affected by highlighting any areas of concern or making a complaint. The Trust will retain a record of your contact, which is held separately to any medical records. If you are acting on behalf of a patient, we may need to obtain the patient's consent in order to protect patient confidentiality. More information on PALS or making a complaint can be found on the Trust's website: www.mtw.nhs.uk or pick up a leaflet from main reception.

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