
Venipuncture – Southwestern Vermont Medical Center

VENIPUNCTURE Collection Protocol

1. The patient should be placed in a sitting or lying position. The sitting position is the easiest method for obtaining a venous sample.
2. Ask patient to be seated in a chair with arm rests. Support the extended arm with a small pillow or a roll of towels.
3. The phlebotomist should make every effort to make the patient feel comfortable, relaxed and at ease. Try to keep his mind off the drawing procedure.
4. Inspect the area you plan to use. You may be able to see the vein. They appear blue and are slightly raised above the skin surface, except in obese people.
5. Apply the tourniquet 3-4 inches above the intended draw site and have the patient clench their hand.
 - a. The tourniquet must be applied with enough tension to compress the vein but not the artery.
 - b. Clenching the hand pumps blood into the vein and makes it bigger.
6. Palpate or feel the vein, even when the vein is seen. The vein will feel like an elastic tube that gives under the pressure of your finger.
 - a. Arteries pulsate so make certain the structure you feel is not pulsating.
 - b. If the vein feels cord-like, such a vein should not be used, as it may be difficult to obtain blood from it.
7. If the vein is difficult to find, the following measures may be taken:
 - a. Massaging the arm from the wrist to the elbow may force blood into the vein.
 - b. Tapping the area sharply with the index or second finger two or three times may cause the vein to dilate.
 - c. If the above measures do not help try looking at the other arm.

*NOTE: If the tourniquet has been applied for more than a minute while searching for a vein, release it for a minute or two and then relocate the vein. Prolonged obstruction of blood flow by the tourniquet changes some test results.

*NOTE: Gloves are to be worn at all times during a venipuncture procedure.
8. Scrub the area for venipuncture with an alcohol pad and allow to air dry.
9. Attach a 21-gauge safety needle to either a vacutainer holder or the appropriate size syringe. Safety needles are to be used at all times for phlebotomy procedures.
10. The syringe/vacutainer is held between the thumb and the three fingers. The index finger is placed on the hub of the needle and is used as a guide.
11. Hold the vein firmly taut by placing your free thumb about an inch below where the needle is to enter and press down on the arm and at the same time pull the skin toward the patient's hand.
12. Before the actual puncture check the following:
 - The needle should be in line with the vein.
 - The needle should be at about a 15-degree angle with the skin.
 - The bevel of the needle should be up.
13. Puncture the vein. If using a vacutainer, insert appropriate tube into the holder and firmly yet gently push the vacutainer onto the needle in holder. Entry into the vein is

accomplished when blood enters the hub of the syringe or when blood flows into the vacutainer tube.

14. When finished drawing the blood, be sure to release the tourniquet before the needle is withdrawn from the arm. Once the needle is withdrawn, apply pressure to the venipuncture sight with sterile gauze square for several minutes until the bleeding has stopped.