

What is a “finger-stick”?

A “finger-stick” is a way to collect blood for lab tests. A small needle (called a lancet) is used to prick your child/the child in your care’s fingertip in order to collect a few drops of blood.

What do I need to know before a “finger-stick”?

You can help your child/the child in your care be in control during the “finger-stick” by letting them choose which finger will be used.

The needle on the lancet is very small. It can be hard to see the needle inside the lancet.



Talk with your child/the child in your care about what scares them about the “finger-stick”. No matter how old they are, it is normal for them to be scared. It is also normal for them to want to cry out after the “finger-stick”.

For some children, it can be helpful to look at the items used during the “finger-stick” first. Some children also find it helpful to practice the steps of the “finger-stick” on a doll or stuffed animal.

It is normal for your child/the child in your care to want to pull their hand away after their fingertip is “stuck”. Here are some helpful tips to keep them safe during the “finger-stick”:

- Hold their entire hand, and not just their finger. It will be easier for them to pull their finger away from you than for them to pull their entire hand away. A tight hold on the entire hand will also help make sure the correct spot on their fingertip is “stuck”.
- If they do pull their hand away after their fingertip is “stuck”, take hold of their hand again, and keep a tight grip on their hand while you point their fingers down toward the floor. If there is a build-up of blood on their finger, this blood should be wiped away, and the blood sample should be collected once new drops of blood appear.

Your child/the child in your care will feel a quick, sharp “stick” or “poke”. It is normal for their finger to sting, throb, or pound for several minutes after the “finger-stick”.

- Once the blood sample is collected, and a band-aid has been put on their finger, they can hold their hand above the level of their heart (such as resting their hand on their own shoulder, or holding their hand over their head) for a couple minutes to help reduce the pain.
- They may not feel as much pain if the “finger-stick” is performed on the SIDE of the fingertip rather than in the center of the fingertip (where their fingerprint is).



How can I sit with my child/the child in my care during a “finger-stick”?

If they are small enough, try sitting with them on your lap, with their back to your front, and “hugging” their other arm close to their body. You can also have them sit facing forward in a chair, with you standing behind the chair to “hug” them, with their back to your front. Either of these positions will make it easier for you to keep a tight hold of their hand and for you to position their fingers.

If they are too large for you to sit with them on your lap or for you to “hug” from behind, try sitting side-by-side next to them. Sit next to them so that the finger you are going to “stick” is on the side of their body pointing away from you. This position will allow you to “hug” their other arm between your body and theirs, or to position their other arm to “hug” you along your back.

Some children do feel comfortable enough to sit by themselves during the “finger-stick”. You can still support them by staying nearby, such as sitting in a chair next to them.

How can I distract my child/the child in my care during a “finger-stick”?

Remind them they can look away and not watch the “finger-stick”.

- Watching a video or show on a tablet or phone can be helpful.
- Ask them to look out a window and tell you what they see, or ask them to look at a picture or item nearby and describe it to you.

Saying a countdown during the “finger-stick” may be helpful for them.

Sing a favorite song together, or ask them to tell you a story.

Ask them to count out loud or say their ABCs.

If they have a favorite movie/tv/cartoon character (such as a superhero), you can talk with them about how that character would feel about getting a “finger-stick”. When the “finger-stick” is over, praise them for how they are just as brave as their favorite character is.

You can give a small reward, such as a sticker or fruit snacks, once the “finger-stick” is over. You can also do a fun activity with them after the “finger-stick” is over.

What can happen during a “finger-stick”?

Some fingers will bleed quickly and easily. Remember this is normal. Make sure to have cotton balls, gauze pads, or tissues available at your side for clean up!

- If there is a large build-up of blood collecting on the fingertip, lift and hold their hand so that it is above the level of their heart. Don’t squeeze their finger or hand. This can help slow down the bleeding.

Some fingers won't bleed as easily and will stop bleeding quickly. Remember this is normal. There are some things you can do before a second try is needed to "stick" another finger:

- Point the finger down towards the floor, and gently squeeze the base of the finger [where the finger meets the palm of the hand].
- Squeeze for 1-2 seconds, and then stop squeezing for a few seconds and allow the blood drops to collect on the fingertip.
- Repeat this cycle of "squeeze and wait" several times to see if you can build up enough blood drops for the sample needed.

If your child/the child in your care's fingertip stops bleeding before enough blood is collected, take a few moments to clean up their fingers and hands from the first try. There are some things you can do before a second "finger-stick" is tried:

- Have them run warm water over their hands for a couple minutes. Dry their hands with a clean and warm towel.
- Have them hold their hands down at their sides, and have them make a fist. Then have them open their fist a few times. If you have a stress ball, they can squeeze that in their fist a few times.
- Have them hold their hands down at their sides and ask them to "shake out" their hands a few times.

Have More Questions? We're Here to Help!

Contact us by phone:

- If your child/the child in your care is a Care4Kids member, please call 1-855-371-8104.
- If your child/the child in your care is a Chorus Community Health Plans member, please call 1-877-227-1142.

This sheet was created to help you care for your child/the child in your care. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment and follow-up.