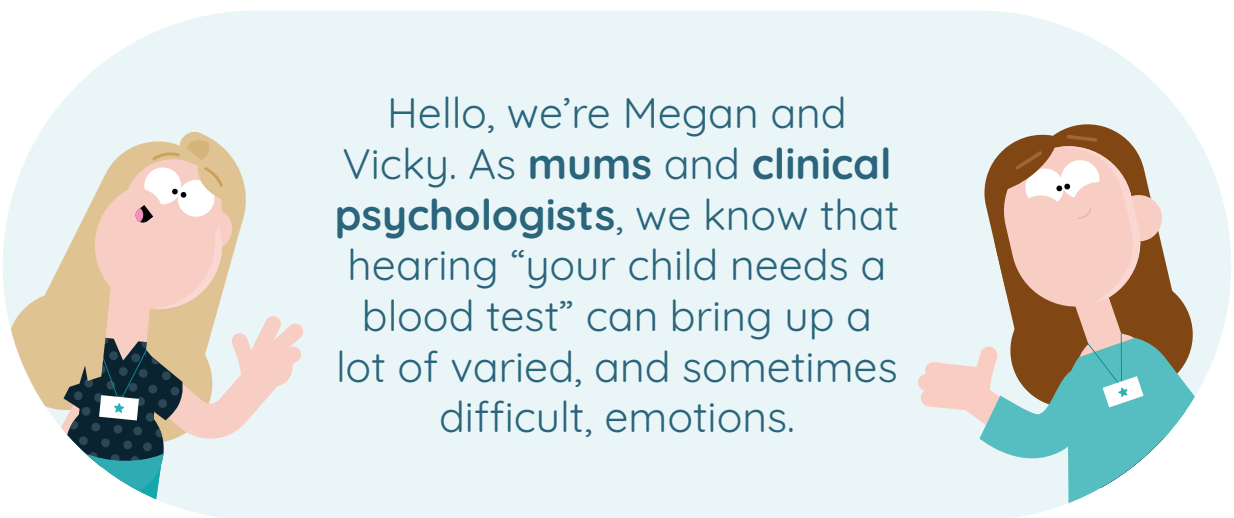


“Your child needs a blood test”



Every child responds differently to having a blood test. Sometimes, children might be really curious about how the body works and feel quite excited. Sometimes, children might struggle and feel anxious. We understand the kind of worries that can appear for parents and caregivers around blood tests. That's why we've gathered our favourite tips, for you to use and adapt to suit your own child's needs and preferences. We hope that they can help you to feel more confident and empowered in supporting your child during their blood test.

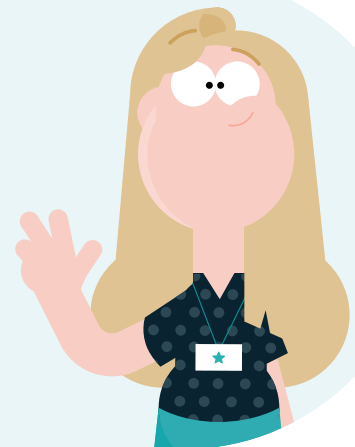
Before the test

To improve your child's blood test experience, **preparing** beforehand can make a big difference. This is particularly important if you know your child might feel anxious or will need to have a blood test again at some point.

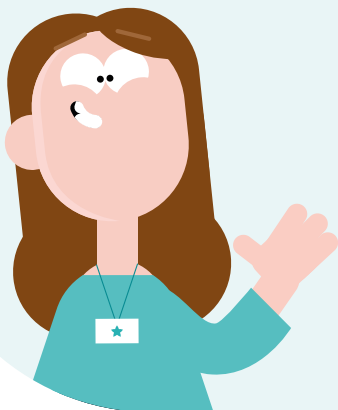
Here are some ideas to help prepare:

- 1 Share with your child **why it's important** they have the blood test. It's best to do this in a way which is clear and simple. We find that talking to them 1-2 days before the blood test works well for most children. Here's how we explained it to our children:

For Megan's 5 year old: "We all have very clever blood in our bodies and blood does very important things to keep us well. The doctor wants to take a look at your blood to make sure it's doing its job as well as possible."



For Vicky's 8 year old: "You know that your tummy has been hurting a lot recently. To try and help you feel better, the doctor needs to have a closer look at your blood, which can give all kinds of helpful information about what's happening in your body."



- 2** Explain **what will happen** during the blood test. Reducing uncertainty can help them cope better on the day. Where possible, try to use visual resources and show the order of events.

Here is an example of a visual schedule you could share with your child:



- 3** Use your child's favourite teddy or soft toy to **role play** having a blood test! The toy can be your patient and your child can watch as you carry out the pretend blood test. Then you could try switching roles! You might like to show them Little Journey's preparation resources.



- 4** Decide together on **coping** and **soothing** strategies. Giving your child options can help create a sense of control and reduce worry.

You might like to think about:



- What they can bring from home to soothe them.
- If they want to look away or watch what's happening.
- What they would like you to do during the test e.g hold their hand, chat to them, or let them sit on your lap.



- 5** Think together about a small **reward** or a nice activity they would like to do after the blood test, e.g. watching a film together, making their favourite dinner or organising a playdate.

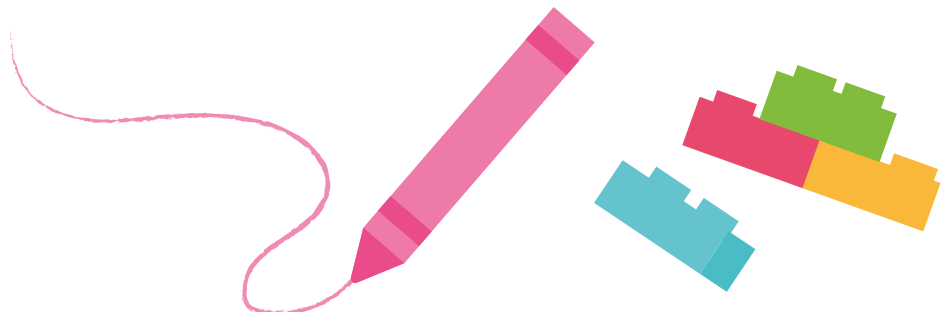


- 6** Gently encourage your child to **drink water** and **keep warm** before the test. This can make it easier for the healthcare professional taking the blood (phlebotomist) to find a vein.



- 7** Check in with your child about how they're feeling about the blood test. You can ask your healthcare team for **extra support** if your child is feeling very worried.

- 8** Take a moment to **acknowledge how you are feeling** and what emotions this experience might bring up. What can you do to soothe yourself around this time?



During the test

Spend some time planning the **distractions** your child might need. We suggest you do these distractions in the waiting room and during the blood test. Remember, the actual blood test could take less than three minutes!

Here are some ideas to get you started:

- A verbal game, like eye spy
- Counting together
- Watching or listening to something they like on a phone or tablet
- Playing games on the Little Journey app

Children often look to their caregivers to see how worried they should feel about something. If you can stay calm, they will likely do the same.



After the test

Whether the blood test went smoothly or not, share with your child any moments where you **noticed their efforts**. You could also acknowledge their bravery with a Little Journey certificate, which they might like to show to other family members or friends.

If your friend had just gone through this experience with their child, what would you say to them? Now, try and say this to yourself.

Your efforts deserve recognition too!

If you know your child is likely to have more blood tests in the future have a think about which strategies helped and which didn't. Is there anything you would do differently for next time?

