

Finger Stick Method for Blood Lead Screening

Follow CDC-recommended universal precautions for obtaining blood

[CDC Blood Specimens-Safety](#)

Purpose:

Detect lead exposure.

For accurate test results, environmental lead contamination must be avoided. Use a clean white paper towel as a work surface, since recycled or colored towels may contain trace amounts of lead.

Equipment:

- disposable gloves
- 70% isopropyl alcohol swab
- dry sterile gauze pads
- sterile lancet
- microtubes (250 microliters)
- appropriate laboratory request form

Steps:

1. Explain to the parent why the test is needed and how lead exposure can affect a child's learning and development.
2. Wash your hands. Put on clean gloves.
3. Wash the child's hands with soap and warm water. Rinse well. Dry with a clean white paper towel.
4. Gently massage the fleshy portion of the finger.

5. Turn the child's palm up. Select the finger to be punctured, usually the middle finger. Grasp the finger between the thumb and index finger.
6. Clean the area with 70% isopropyl alcohol. Allow the alcohol to air dry completely. Air drying allows the antiseptic enough contact time to kill the bacteria.
7. Position the lancet slightly lateral at the center of the fingertip. Quickly puncture the fingertip with the sterile lancet. Make the cut perpendicular to the ridges of the skin. Have the child hang their arm down or assist them to allow a steady flow of unclotted blood into the tube.
8. Dispose of the lancet in the sharps container.
9. Wipe away and discard the first drop of blood with sterile gauze or a cotton ball. Note: The first drop contains tissue fluid and will produce inaccurate results.
10. Point the puncture site downward. Gently apply pressure to the surrounding tissue to increase blood flow. Note: Avoid strong repetitive pressure (milking). It can cause hemolysis or contaminate the specimen with tissue fluid.
11. Still grasping the finger, touch the tip of the microtube to the beaded drop of blood. Collect the second and third drops. Mix with the EDTA in the tube to prevent clotting. Continue collecting and mixing periodically until you reach 250 microliters.
12. Cap the tube. Rock it 8 to 10 times to mix the blood with the EDTA.
13. Apply an adhesive bandage, if appropriate. Note: Do not apply adhesive bandages to puncture sites in children under 2 years of age. Bandages can irritate infant skin, and an older infant may remove the bandage, put it in the mouth, and possibly aspirate it.
14. Send the sample to the lab for analysis.

	Department of Health Authorization No. 355901. This Electronic publication was promulgated at zero cost. February 2023
---	---

REVISED
10:30 a.m.
September 2, 2026