



Heel Stick Method for Blood Lead Screening

Preferred method for children less than one year of age

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

Procedure:

1. Explain to the parent the reason for the test and how important it is to the child's learning ability and development to have the test done.
2. Wash your hands and put on clean gloves.
3. Select the puncture site on the heel. The preferred puncture sites are on the medial or lateral plantar surface of the heel (the fleshy areas on either side). Avoid the center of the heel and the posterior curve.

4. Clean the area of the heel to be punctured with 70% isopropyl alcohol. Let it air dry completely. Vigorous rubbing during this step stimulates blood flow in the area.
5. Puncture the skin with one continuous motion using a sterile lancet with a 2.5 mm tip. Longer tips may cause excessive tissue damage. Wipe away and discard the first drop of blood, as it is contaminated by disinfectant or tissue fluid.
6. Allow the second drop to form by the spontaneous free flow of blood. Grasp the heel, touch the tip of the collection container to the beaded drop of blood. Collect the second and third drops of blood in the microtube and mix with the EDTA in the tube to prevent clotting. Continue collecting blood and periodically mix it with EDTA throughout the collection until 250 microliters have been collected.
7. Once the required amount of blood is collected, cap the tube and rock it 8-10 times to further mix the blood with the EDTA.
8. Once the blood collection is completed, and while the patient's foot is held above the heart level, press a sterile gauze to the puncture site until the bleeding has stopped.
9. Send the specimen 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