

**GUIDELINES FOR:  
 TAKING BLOOD SAMPLES**

<b>Amendments</b>			
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**1 .INTRODUCTION**

Essential to monitoring a baby's progress or deterioration blood samples will be required. They also assist with the planning of treatment, the assessment of condition, the requirement of correct nutrition, the assessment of therapeutic drug levels, changes to ventilation and diagnosis of problems. Blood tests are costly to both the NHS and the baby and should only be performed if they are in the best interest of the baby and their treatment, and should not be carried out without thought to the benefits of them.

**2. AIMS**

Providing developmentally supportive care whilst carrying out blood tests will help to ensure that they can be carried out with the minimum disturbance to the baby and other babies in the nursery, it should also help to make the test successful and less frequently have to be repeated.

**TAKING BLOOD SAMPLES**

Action	Rationale
<b>Parents</b>	
Explain the procedure and reasons for it to parents. Give them the choice of whether or not to stay with their baby.	It can help some parents to feel less anxious if they can anticipate what will happen, and be there during the procedure.
Encourage parents to share their knowledge of what calms and comforts their baby.	Gives parents a positive role in supporting their baby.
Reassure parents that by giving gentle loving touch they are teaching their baby not to fear normal handling.	Parents often worry that these traumatic procedures will psychologically damage their baby.
Encourage parents to be available to settle their baby after blood taking.	Allows the baby to associate parents with comfort and supports the parenting role.

Planning And Preparation	
Always consider if the blood test is really necessary for the benefit of the baby, can any tests be combined to prevent bleeding the baby more than necessary.	Subjecting the baby to unnecessary tests is unacceptable and avoidable.
Whenever possible take blood samples via an indwelling line.	This reduces the need for more painful methods.
Identifying which routine tests are required and when, will enable the nurse to time them to coincide with cares or wakeful periods.	This allows the nurse to anticipate events and plan the day accordingly.
Try to avoid waking the baby. If necessary to take blood from a sleeping baby comfort care is still important.	Sleep is important for growth, healing and neurological development.
Just before a nappy change or all cares may be a good time.	If the parents are not available then the baby's nurse will be able to remain with the baby to help them to settle after the procedure.
Times to avoid are during or just after a feed, or interrupting a socially active time with parents.	An important goal of developmental care is to promote interaction with parents. Upsetting a baby around a feed time can result in swallowing air, reflux and other digestive disturbance.
Collect everything that you need for the procedure and to support the baby e.g. equipment, positioning aids, dummy.	To enable you to give your full attention to the baby.
Maintain ambient temperature, which may mean increasing incubator temperature prior to procedure, or closing doors in nursery.	To prevent heat loss and discomfort.
Ask parents or another member of staff to help support the baby if needed.	Parents can have an active role in supporting their baby.
Ensure that background light, noise and activity levels are kept low.	These can reduce stress levels of babies, parents and staff.

Administer appropriate analgesia prior to the blood taking. Use non-pharmacological pain relieving strategies e.g. sucking	To ensure effectiveness. Sensitive support during procedure may modify amount of analgesia required.
<b>During Blood Taking</b>	
Use spotlights to illuminate only relevant areas. Shield the baby's eyes with incubator cover or eye shields.	Babies find it difficult to cope with bright light. Localised lighting protects other babies in the room.
Approach the baby quietly, talking softly and only remove as many covers as necessary.	Promote smooth changes between states e.g. sleep and awake. Babies feel vulnerable when uncovered.
If necessary gently move the baby to gain access to relevant area without stretching or twisting limbs or body. Use flexed positions preferably in side lying or prone. Positioning aids will keep baby in position.	Sensitive movement aid the baby's stability. Correct positioning of body and limbs is relevant for comfort. Side lying allows the baby to self-regulate. Positioning aids calm disorganised movements.
Gently undress/unwrap the relevant area. Keep as much of the baby wrapped as possible. If inserting a line unwrap and explore one limb at a time.	Avoid heat loss and unnecessary disturbance. Clothing and wraps can help to support a baby's self-regulatory efforts.
Take steps to support and comfort the baby e.g. with swaddling, holding hands/feet/head, flexed posture, offering the baby a dummy, something to grasp or brace against	By having knowledge of the baby's own preferences allows appropriate choice of non-medical supports to assist self-regulation.
Allow alcohol used to prepare skin to dry before lancing.	This ensures aseptic conditions and prevents alcohol entering the site causing stinging pain.
Select the correct size of mechanical lance appropriate for baby's size for heel prick.	This ensures less discomfort and less damage.
Perform heel prick on medial or lateral aspect of the heel.	This may facilitate blood flow and reduce the need to squeeze the foot.
For venous sample select the smallest possible size needle and ensure that it is	Avoids unnecessary discomfort by digging with the needle.

inserted at correct angle.	
Use cotton wool to stem the bleeding by wrapping it around the limb and holding together with tape. Tape only to touch the cotton wool.	This helps to avoid painful tissue trauma resulting from the use of adhesive tape or plasters.
After Blood Taking	
Re-dress, re-position and re-cover the baby gently, cuddle or give skin-to-skin cuddle. Provide support until heart rate, breathing, oxygenation and colour have returned to their normal levels.	To promote a quick recovery from the procedure and smooth transition to a relaxed state.
Observe baby's behaviour after procedure to ensure baby remains stable.	Effects of stressful procedures may be delayed.
Share with parents and/or staff any adverse reactions, noting techniques that supported the baby.	Care givers can anticipate difficulties and choose the most appropriate technique, timing and pacing for future blood taking.

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