

Drawing From Young Children #3230

By a child's third birthday, tasks are becoming easier to accomplish and the ability to understand and communicate is rapidly increasing. A child of this age usually knows what "going to the doctor" means. Depending on the child's past experiences, if he or she associates visiting the doctor with pain, great resistance can be expected. This resistance will be experienced by all staff who are present, especially if they show up with needles.

Children of this age can understand and follow simple instructions, so it is important to explain your reason for being there and what you are going to do. Simple words must be used, but never use the word "hurt" or that the procedure will "feel like a bee sting." Using the word "pinch" will be less frightening to the child. Children can sense fear, anxiety, or frustration in others, and if you are feeling nervous about doing a pediatric draw, the child will pick up on that. Always keep a professional and calm, soothing demeanor.

Be mindful that children move quickly and can be into things before you know it. Remember, they are curious and still learning about their environment, exploring anything and everything. By this age, children have mastered many physical activities including climbing to reach things. A parent or guardian should be with the child at all times to ensure he or she remains safe. Sharps containers must always be out of reach. Needles or anything with a sharp edge must not be left out where a young one can get hold of it.



Children in this age group like to talk about their favorite toys, pets, and activities they enjoy. Get them involved in telling you about those things. Younger children can be involved in singing the ABC song, while older ones will have interests in things they likely have seen on television. Little boys are fond of super-heros and will readily talk about them and may even show you their special super-hero moves. As for girls, many want to be princesses. If they indicate they like princesses, ask them about their favorites, what their names are, etc.

Do you know some magic tricks? Excellent. Show them off. It is okay to be a bit silly and still be professional. Find out what your young patient is interested in and strike up a conversation about that before you get down to business. Children, just like adults, are more trusting of people who "speak their language."

Children love bandages; the fancier the better. Try to have special super-hero, princess, or other fun novelty bandages available and let the child pick one out for when the procedure is over. Ask the child to hold it for you until you need it. Giving the child this task will increase cooperation with the procedure because he or she will have a responsibility in the process and will be looking forward to having the bandage applied. This gives your young patient something positive to focus on. Also try to have stickers or small toys available in a basket. The child can select one prior to the venipuncture and have it in sight as a reward for being brave.



Get down on the child's level by sitting or kneeling so you are face to face with her and not looking down on the child. After gaining rapport by showing interest in her favorite things, you can then begin to introduce her to the process of the blood sample collection. Let her see the stretchy tourniquet, show how it will be applied, then let her pretend to put it on you. Show her the alcohol swab and let her smell it and feel the cold on her arm before you use another to cleanse the site. The child can hold the gauze or extra tubes. Introducing the child to the supplies in this way will help her become familiar with the procedure and reduce her level of fear and anxiety.

Sometimes, despite your best efforts to gain rapport with a child, he will become physically aggressive. To prevent injury to the child or yourself, always have another adult, either a parent, caregiver, or other staff member, assist you with a pediatric blood draw. Position the child so as to provide the greatest confidence that the sample will be safely collected on the initial attempt. Prepare yourself mentally and physically. Have all supplies close at hand and move quickly and with confidence to complete the procedure. When a child is upset and aggressive, some test results could be temporarily altered, so sometimes the best thing to do is delay the draw.



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1. Children between the ages of three and six are not able to understand the phlebotomy process, so it is best to just get someone to hold the child down and perform the venipuncture quickly.
 - a. True
 - b. False
2. How might a phlebotomist communicate with children between the ages of three and six?
 - a. stand close to them and explain what is going to happen
 - b. sit or kneel to get at their level and speak in simple terms
 - c. gain rapport by encouraging them to talk about a favorite toy, pet, or other interest
 - d) b and c
3. What types of activity can be expected from a three-to-six year old child?
 - a. quick movement
 - b. climbing
 - c. exploring their environment
 - d. all of the above
4. How can a child be made to feel like a participant in the procedure instead of just being subjected to it?
 - a. explain the process to the child so he knows what to expect and give him a job to do, such as holding the gauze or extra tubes
 - b. tell him he has to be brave and it won't hurt for too long
 - c. both a and b
 - d. none of the above
5. How would you ease the fears a child might have of the medical supplies she sees?
 - a. show her how the tourniquet will be applied on her arm and let her pretend to put it on you or her parent
 - b. let her touch and smell an alcohol swab
 - c. don't let her see the supplies
 - d. both a and b
6. If the child becomes aggressive, how should the situation be handled?
 - a. have adequate assistance available to prevent injury to the child and caregivers
 - b. tell the child he can't have the prize he picked out if he kicks, punches, or bites
 - c. consider delaying the draw and notifying the physician
 - d. both a and c

Name: _____ Date: _____

Department: _____