

What is the phlebotomy procedure? A step-by-step guide

Phlebotomists are health care professionals who draw blood from patients for blood transfusions or laboratory testing purposes. Venipuncture, the most common phlebotomist procedure, involves drawing blood directly from the veins for blood analysis. The step-by-step routine is as follows:

Before any blood can be drawn, several criteria must be met.

- First, phlebotomy technicians must confirm the identity of the patient.
- Armbands of all inpatients should reveal exact names and medical record numbers. Outpatients must individually divulge their names and dates of birth.
- Phlebotomists must make sure that the name and medical record number on the laboratory requisition match the information on the armband and/or information provided by the patient.

Preparatory procedures include washing hands per proper hand-washing standards and wearing appropriate gloves.

The venipuncture process requires phlebotomists to follow carefully fabricated protocol:

1. Inspect the patient's arm, and then select an appropriate venipuncture site.
2. Place the tourniquet approximately 3 to 5 inches above the vein site. Instruct the patient to extend his/her arm and flex and relax the fist a few times to engorge the veins for easier identification. Never leave the tourniquet on the arm for more than two minutes without releasing.
3. Palpate the selected vein if necessary.
4. Cleanse the area with alcohol or povidone-iodine prep pads. Allow the area to dry completely.
5. Prepare the Vacutainer® holder by aseptically screwing in the multisampling needle into the holder. Use only holders that are equipped with a needle safety device.
6. While firmly grasping the Vacutainer® holder with the dominant hand, puncture the vein at a 35° to 45° angle.
7. As the needle enters the skin, lower the angle so that only the anterior wall of the vein is pierced.
8. Push the Vacutainer® tube onto the needle in the holder.

9. Maintain stability of the needle in the vein. Blood should immediately begin to fill the tube due to the vacuum action.
10. Fill all tubes completely.
11. Remove the tube and replace it with a new tube as needed, keeping the needle steady and in the vein.
12. Gently invert the collected tube of blood several times, being careful not to shake the tube.
13. When drawing multiple blood samples, it is imperative to draw the blood in a specific order to prevent contamination of subsequently drawn tubes.
14. After blood has been drawn, phlebotomists need to handle all samples cautiously:
15. After collecting the required amount of samples, release the tourniquet.
16. Remove the Vacutainer® tube from the holder before removing the needle from the vein.
17. Press a sterile gauze pad over the venipuncture site and remove the needle.
18. Hold the pad in place for one to three minutes until bleeding has stopped.
19. After the bleeding has stopped, place a bandage over the site to prevent blood leakage.
20. Medical standards mandate the immediate labeling of all specimens with the patient's name and medical record number. Be sure that the name on the requisition and corresponding tube are spelled correctly.
21. After labeling the specimens, indicate the number and type of tubes drawn and the time of collection on the requisition. Sign the requisition with your name or phlebotomy identification code. Initial all blood bank tubes.
22. Place all tubes in the approved specimen transport bag with the requisition and transport to the laboratory as soon as possible. Understand and implement all optimal storage and transportation standards.

Phlebotomists are ultimately responsible for the accurate diagnosis of patients' health in regard to blood analysis.

These procedures help prevent any distortions or oversights that could potentially harm the patient or produce unreliable diagnoses.

