



PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Instructions After Your Therapeutic Phlebotomy Procedure

This information will help you know what to do after your therapeutic phlebotomy (fleh-BAH-toh-mee) procedure.

Therapeutic phlebotomy is a blood draw that's done to treat a medical problem, such as having too much iron in your blood. With therapeutic phlebotomy, more blood is drawn than during a regular blood draw. Your doctor will decide how much blood will be drawn based on the reason you're having the procedure.

If you can, it's helpful to drink more liquids than usual before your therapeutic phlebotomy procedure. Aim to drink 8 to 10 (8-ounce) glasses of liquids for 1 day before your procedure.

What to Expect During Your Procedure

You will sit in a chair in the treatment area for your procedure. During your therapeutic phlebotomy procedure, a nurse will use a needle connected to a blood collection bag to draw a certain amount of your blood. After the right amount of blood is drawn, the nurse will remove the needle and place a pressure bandage (bandage that wraps around your arm) over the needle site (the place on your arm where the needle was).

Instructions After Your Procedure

- Leave the pressure bandage on your needle site for 3 to 6 hours after your procedure.
- Avoid activities that may strain the arm used during your procedure (such as exercise and heavy lifting) for at least 1 day after your procedure.

You may feel lightheaded or dizzy after your therapeutic phlebotomy procedure. To help keep this from happening:

- Drink more liquids than usual for 1 to 2 days after your procedure. Try to drink at least 8 to 10 (8-ounce) glasses each day.
- Avoid alcohol and drinks with caffeine (such as coffee, tea, and cola) for the rest of the day after your procedure.
- Avoid strenuous exercise (such as jogging) for 1 day after your procedure.
- Don't smoke for at least 1 hour after your procedure.
- Don't take a hot bath for the rest of the day after your procedure.

If you feel lightheaded or dizzy, sit down and place your head between your knees. You can also lie down flat and raise your feet and legs slightly. For example, you can rest them on a couple of pillows.

Caring for Your Needle Site

You may have discomfort, bleeding, swelling, or bruising at your needle site. Follow the guidelines below to help with these side effects.

Guidelines for managing discomfort

- Hold ice or a cool pack over the site for 10 to 15 minutes, then take it off for 10 to 15 minutes. Repeat as needed.

Guidelines for managing bleeding

- Raise your arm above your head and apply pressure with your other hand for 5 minutes or longer.
- Cover the site with a bandage or put the pressure bandage back on the site, if needed.

Guidelines for managing swelling

- Raise your arm above your head and apply pressure for 3 to 5 minutes.
- Hold ice or a cold pack over the site for 10 to 15 minutes, then take it off for 10 to 15 minutes. Repeat as needed.

Guidelines for managing bruising

- Hold ice or a cold pack over the site for 10 to 15 minutes, then take it off for 10 to 15 minutes. Repeat as needed to help the bruising fade.

Bruises may spread around your needle site and take about 7 to 10 days to go away.

Call Your Healthcare Provider's Office if You Have:

- Discomfort, bleeding, or swelling that isn't helped by following the guidelines above.
- Bleeding that you can't stop.
- A fever of 101° F (38.3° C) or higher.
- Redness, warmth, or pain at your needle site.
- Any other unexpected side effects.
- Any questions or concerns.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

Instructions After Your Therapeutic Phlebotomy Procedure - Last updated on February 21, 2022

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