

Northamptonshire General Practice Venepuncture SOP

Suggested Standard Operating Procedure for Patients Aged 12 Years and Above Purpose

Northamptonshire General Practice will support delivery of routine venepuncture services for patients aged 12 years and above in accordance with the Community Phlebotomy Service Specification. The aim of this SOP is to ensure:

- Safe and effective blood sample collection
- Consistent standards across all practices
- Appropriate training and competency of staff
- Safe care for young people aged 12-15 years
- Appropriate management of patients with anxiety or complex needs

This SOP should be read alongside local infection prevention procedures, safeguarding guidance and the practice's venepuncture procedures.

The use of smaller gauge butterfly devices, including 25G devices where clinically appropriate for paediatric patients, is supported within the adult venepuncture guidance. Topical anaesthetic may be considered where required.

Scope

Applies to:

- GPs
- Practice Nurses
- Nursing Associates
- Healthcare Assistants
- Phlebotomists
- Any member of staff undertaking venepuncture within General Practice

Applies to:

- Adults aged 16 years and over
- Young people aged 12 years to 15 years and 364 days

Training Requirements

New Staff

All staff undertaking venepuncture must:

- Attend the Training Hub approved Introduction to Phlebotomy Programme
- Complete the associated workbook
- Undertake supervised practice within the practice
- Be signed off as competent by an appropriately qualified assessor
- Maintain evidence of competency

Competency should include supervised practice and formal sign-off before independent practice.

Existing Staff

Existing competent staff must:

- Maintain evidence of competence
- Complete a venepuncture update every 18-24 months
- Participate in regular practice review and appraisal

If competency has lapsed, staff should undertake refresher training prior to continuing practice.

Venepuncture for Young People Aged 12-15 Years and 364 Days

Why additional requirements are needed

The biggest differences between adults and young people aged 12-15 years and 364 days are:

- Consent and Gillick competence
- Managing anxiety and needle phobia
- Understanding when to stop and refer

The venepuncture technique itself is largely unchanged.

Minimum Requirements for 12-15 Year and 364 Days Old Blood Tests

Before undertaking venepuncture in patients aged 12-15 years and 364 days practitioners must:

- Hold current adult venepuncture competency
- Have completed venepuncture updates within the previous 18-24 months
- Have safeguarding children training appropriate to their role
- Understand consent, assent and Gillick competence
- Understand management of anxiety and needle phobia
- Be competent in the use of appropriate venepuncture equipment including 21-25G butterfly devices where clinically indicated
- Be able to recognise and manage vasovagal episodes
- Understand when referral to specialist paediatric services is required

If Gillick competence was not included within previous training, staff should contact the Training Hub for guidance on the recommended NHS e-Learning modules before undertaking venepuncture on 12-15 year and 364 days old.

Practical Pathway for 12-15 Year and 364 Days Olds

Before the Appointment

- Ask about needle anxiety when booking
- Consider whether an extended appointment is required
- Offer parent/carer involvement where appropriate
- Consider topical anaesthetic (EMLA or Ametop) for anxious young people

During the Appointment

- Confirm identity
- Confirm consent
- Understand the principles of Gillick competence and parental responsibility
- Involve parent/carer as required
- Explain the procedure clearly to the young person
- Allow sufficient time
- Use 21-25G butterfly devices where clinically appropriate
- Monitor for anxiety and vasovagal symptoms

Following the Procedure

- Ensure haemostasis

- Provide reassurance
- Document care provided
- Record any incidents or complications

When to Refer

Consider referral where:

- Unsuccessful attempts have occurred
- Significant needle phobia is present
- Complex health needs are identified
- Learning disability or neurodiversity requires additional support
- Practitioner feels the procedure cannot be completed safely
- Specialist paediatric input is required

As a guide, no more than two unsuccessful attempts should be made by the same practitioner during a single appointment. Practices should also refer to the agreed Hard-to-Bleed pathway where applicable.

Equipment

Practices should ensure access to:

- Standard venepuncture equipment
- Butterfly devices 21G-25G as clinically appropriate
- Suitable paediatric-sized dressings if required
- Topical anaesthetic products where locally agreed
- Appropriate sharps disposal systems

The use of smaller gauge butterfly devices can reduce discomfort and the 25G device is identified as suitable for paediatric patients.

Governance and Competency

Practices should maintain:

- Training records.
- Competency assessments.
- Evidence of refresher training.
- Records of any local sign-off process.

The maintenance of these records remains the responsibility of the individual practice as part of its existing governance arrangements.