

Should I avoid any activities after giving the sample?

To reduce any risk of bruising, where possible we suggest you avoid any heavy lifting or strenuous exercise for the rest of the day you give your sample.

If you experience any of the following, you should seek further help, for instance from your GP or NHS direct:

- Severe pain
- Numbness or persistent 'pins and needles' in the arm, hand or fingers
- Swelling which is large or increasing in size
- Painful redness / inflammation

If you have any further queries contact NatCen Social Research on **0800 652 4574** during office hours.

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Giving a blood sample

Frequently Asked Questions

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The NatCen survey nurses follow 'best practice' principles which meet current national standards used within the NHS.

This leaflet gives answers to some of the questions people often ask about giving a blood sample.

If you have any further queries please ask the NatCen survey nurse.

Why do you need to take a blood sample?

The analysis of the blood samples will tell us a lot about the health of people aged over 50 in England. It adds importantly to the information you have already given us. Your survey nurse will explain about the tests we will carry out for this particular study.

What about hygiene standards?

The survey nurses maintain the highest hygiene standards to reduce any risk of infection. We use a new sterile needle and tubes for every person.

Is any special equipment needed?

Before a needle is inserted in your vein, the survey nurse will apply a tourniquet (a band put round your arm to control your blood flow). This keeps more blood in the vein, making it easier for the nurse to see and access it.

The nurse will use a needle to draw blood into a number of small sample tubes (typically 2ml to 6ml) which are dispatched to the lab for analysis. If the nurse is using a modern needle model called a 'butterfly needle' they will first use another small sample tube to get the blood flowing. This tube is then safely discarded by the nurse and not sent to the lab.

Does it hurt?

Blood sampling may cause some discomfort. Very rarely you may feel a stronger sensation. Please tell the nurse immediately if you are at all concerned.

What if I feel faint?

Anyone might feel faint during or immediately after giving a blood sample, although most people don't. If you begin to feel faint at all, tell the nurse as soon as possible, if you can. The nurse will be watching you for any signs of fainting, and if necessary will stop taking the blood sample.

If you actually faint, which can happen but is very unlikely, you will be advised not to drive for at least 30 minutes once you have come round.

Will I get results from my blood sample?

We are usually able to give you feedback about some of your blood sample results, if you would like this. We may also be able to send some of your results to your GP if you agree and give us written consent.

How long should I keep the dressing on afterwards?

The nurse will apply a dressing after taking the sample. You should leave this dressing on for at least 30 minutes after the blood sample has been taken.

Will I get bruised?

Bruising occurs when blood leaks from a vein into the surrounding tissues. The nurse will make every attempt to reduce bruising through applying pressure to the affected vein after taking the blood sample. However, bruising does sometimes occur. This may be slightly uncomfortable for a day or so after giving the sample but usually no action is required. If it gets worse (for example if the bruise hurts or gets much bigger), you should seek further help, for instance from your GP or dialling the NHS 111 service.