Common Reasons for Capillary Puncture

Capillary Puncture for Young Children and Infants

Infants and younger children can present a challenge to even a seasoned phlebotomist. There are several reasons for this:

- Veins in the arms are small and not as pronounced as those found in older children, adolescents and adults. Attempting to do so in an infant or young child may cause damage to the draw site.
- The volume of blood drawn from a standard venipuncture with an evacuated tube or syringe could be hazardous for a young child or infant causing anemia or even cardiac arrest.
- National Newborn Screening and Genetic Resource Center prefers capillary heelsticks (puncture) for Newborn Screening blood collection
- It is safer for the phlebotomist to conduct a capillary puncture as they tend to have more control of the patients reaction and body area of procedure as opposed to the antecubital regions.
- Veins may be fragile from illness or therapeutic applications such as chemotherapy.
- If the child is very fearful, the sight of a long needle enhances the fear. A lancet typically hides the blade from site meaning less physical restraining for the young patient.
- Infection, gangrene, hemorrhaging and venous thrombosis may occur with deeper than needed venipuncture attempts.

Due to these facts, capillary puncture is the ideal and preferred method for newborns, infants, and young children.