



**Virginia Department of Health**  
**Office of Licensure and Certification**  
**Office of Family Health Services**

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**Frequently Asked Questions for Parents regarding  
the Virginia Child ID Blood Spot Collection Information**

**Q. What is the Child ID Blood Spot program?**

A. The Child Blood Spot program gives you the option at the time of your child's birth of having the hospital collect and give you a sample of your newborn's blood. In the event of a future emergency involving your child such as an accident, abduction, or natural or manmade disaster, the blood collected can be used to perform a DNA analysis for use in identifying your child. As with a child's fingerprints, just having the blood sample does not keep your child safe, but when you store your child's blood sample you will have an additional piece of information you can provide to authorities in an emergency.

**Q. Is collection of the sample required?**

A. No. The hospital is required to offer to collect your infant's blood sample and provide it to you, but the hospital will not collect the sample unless you say you want it. The hospital will ask you for your consent before collecting this blood sample for (future) use in child identification.

**Q. How is the sample taken?**

A. A drop of blood is spotted onto a specially designed blood stain card, placed in a protective envelope with a drying agent, sealed and given directly to you for storage and safekeeping. The sample can be collected at delivery using your baby's cord blood or later when your baby's blood is collected in the hospital nursery for the separate newborn screening that is required by law to identify diseases and disorders.

**Q. How is the Child Blood Spot program blood sample collection different from the collection of blood for required newborn screening?**

A. State law requires that every newborn infant be screened for certain diseases and disorders. This newborn screening process, which allows for diagnosis and early treatment of these disorders in order to prevent permanent disability or death, begins when the hospital collects several spots of the newborn's blood on a special card and sends the card to a state-approved laboratory for analysis to identify any disorders. This differs from the Child Blood Spot program collection, which is done on a separate card and is given to you directly, the parent for storage and safekeeping.

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**Q. What should I do with the Child ID Blood Spot sample?**

A. Only you, the parent, will have access to this sample. Once the hospital collects the sample and provides it to you, the hospital has no further responsibility for the sample, including its storage, analysis or use. We recommend that you place the sample in a safe, dry place at normal room temperature. Once sealed, this pouch should not be opened unless and until there is a need for DNA testing to identify your child because exposure to air and light can cause the DNA in the bloodstain to breakdown or can expose the sample to contamination.

**Q. How long does the sample last?**

A. If the pouch remains sealed and is kept in a dry place at normal temperature, the sample should be useful for DNA analysis for many years.

**Q. What is DNA?**

A. DNA stands for deoxyribonucleic acid. It is often referred to as the building blocks of life. DNA contains the genetic information that makes each human unique. With the exception of identical twins, everyone's DNA is different. DNA does not change over the course of an individual's life.

**Q. Is an inked footprint taken of my child at birth a good method of identification?**

A. An inked footprint could be useful in identifying an infant only for a short amount of time, such as right after birth. In most cases, a newborn's feet are full of creases and wrinkles, but as a baby grows, these creases and wrinkles will decrease and the footprint ridges will become more prominent. Because of these changes, the footprints taken at birth might not be useful in identifying an older child. Having a blood sample could be a valuable tool for identification.

**Q. DNA can be obtained from saliva, so why blood?**

A. DNA test results can be obtained from saliva. However, for purposes of long term storage, blood is the best option. The normal bacteria found in the mouth can cause the DNA in the saliva to break down over time. By storing a blood sample, you significantly increase the possibility that the sample will be usable for DNA testing.

**Q. Who else has access to this blood sample?**

A. No one has access to the sample but you, the parent. Only one blood sample will be taken, and this sample will be given to you after collection. The hospital does not keep or have access to the blood sample after it is collected for the purposes of the Child Blood Spot program.

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**Q. Must DNA testing be done at the time the blood sample is taken from my child?**

A. No. It is not necessary to perform DNA testing at this time. This blood sample is only a method of keeping a sample containing your child's DNA available in the care of an emergency requiring identification of your child. Your child's DNA will not change over the course of his or her lifetime. DNA testing methods; however, do change. The type of test performed today might be outdated in the future. By storing the blood stain card without analyzing it, the best technology in place at the time of need can be used.