

Tip of the Month



Are You Too Organized?

You like to be ready when the next patient comes in. Your tubes are all lined up in the rack, neatly sorted by size and stopper color so you can pick them out quickly once you see the next patient's order. The tourniquet is nicely draped over the arm of the drawing chair, and the bandage is unwrapped and ready to go. Your gauze pad is sitting out on top of the alcohol prep like they can't wait, either. You even have the needle assembled to the tube holder so you can get right to it.

If this describes you, you've just gone too far. You're too organized.

There's nothing wrong with being ready, but by preassembling the needle with the tube holder or syringe, you've just eliminated a crucial element to every patient's phlebotomy experience: confidence that the needle you're about to use isn't left over from the last patient.

Sure, you know it's clean. That's not the point. The patients have to know, and there's no way for them to know unless they see it being assembled.

Look, every outpatient knows they're about to take a seat in the same chair dozens of patients that day have sat in, and for the same purpose. They know every patient before them had a needle in their vein that looks just like the one you have set out waiting for their arrival. That's why they need to know the needle being used on them is clean, not one that was just set down after the last draw and stayed there.

A new needle looks exactly like a used needle with the sheath put back on. Exactly.

Assembling your devices in advance saves you about 3 seconds, but costs you the patient's confidence. If those three seconds matter that much, you should be trading on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange or saddled to the back of a race horse. But you're not. You're a phlebotomist. You're not timing a trade or racing your horse; you're drawing a blood sample from a patient who has three seconds to spare.

Give them to him.

Those three seconds aren't yours anyway; they're his, reserved for him to see you take the separate components of the blood collection device out of their packages and put them together.