

# Tip of the Month



## One Touch Too Many

It's me again, your patient's skin. Last month I told you how to make that needle of yours almost painless, but there's something else that's been bugging me lately. Bugs! I don't mind bacteria crawling all over me. In fact, it's normal for me to be crawling with harmless critters. But if there's a break in me—like there's gonna be when you insert that needle—that's when they can get nasty. Lucky for me, you cleansed me good first with alcohol. Thank you. I appreciate it.

But the problem is, you just got me all dirty again by retouching me right where you're gonna put the needle. Don't you realize that you just loaded me up with bugs that can give me and my owner our worst nightmare: an infection? Look, we're already sick, don't make us any sicker by planting bacteria right where you're going to make a wound.

Oh, and I see you're going to draw some blood cultures, too. That's just great! Not only are you going to infect me and my boss, but you're also going to contaminate the culture. When the lab gets those blood culture vials, the bacteria you planted on my surface are already multiplying. Within hours, the lab will be calling the doctor to say my boss has a positive blood culture when we don't. The next thing you know, we're being loaded up with antibiotics we don't need and stuck here in the hospital longer than we should be. All because you just had to go back and touch me to find the vein after you cleansed me so nicely.

Look, I don't mean to scold you. We need you to draw this blood. Your work is absolutely critical in order for us to get better and get home. But we need you to draw it properly. So just let me give you some friendly advice about how others draw our blood without re-contaminating me. When they first find the vein, they make a mental note where it lies in relation to skin structures like creases, freckles, hairlines, moles and things. Then after they cleanse me, they don't have to re-contaminate me because they remember where the vein is. Sometimes they use their finger, but only to palpate above and below the intended puncture site just before needle insertion. Others cleverly use the alcohol prep as a pointer. After cleansing the site, they place the square prep on the skin just above the intended puncture site with a corner of the prep pointing to the exact place on the skin beneath which the vein was found.

Do me just this one favor: Don't touch the same clean place you're going to put the needle in. That's one touch too many.