



Venepuncture: when you can't find the vein.

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“They always, *a/ways* have trouble getting blood from me”.

How many times have you had a patient say this to you just as you are mentally psyching yourself up for that one-stab, perfect-hit, venepuncture or cannulation to impress the new-grads?

So, you try the usual strategies such as:

- Hanging the arm below the heart level for a few seconds ‘gravity’ fill the veins.
- Applying heat packs.
- Asking the patient to pump their fist.
- Looking around for someone else to delegate this task to.

Here is another quick tip that I have read about (and had varying degrees of success with) that just may help when trying to perform a venepuncture or cannulation on a patient with *shy vasculature*.

1. Attach a Blood Pressure cuff to the upper arm and inflate to around 200mmHg for 6 seconds (although times of up to 3 minutes have been proposed).
2. Release the cuff.

Reactive hyperaemia (or the transient increase in blood flow that occurs following a brief period of ischaemia) will produce an increased blood flow to the arm.

3. After a few seconds to allow the veins to engorge, apply tourniquet and proceed as usual.
4. Watch the new-grads nod in a moment of quiet awe, before walking away to Google-up on Reactive hyperaemia <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hyperaemia>



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