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What do fasting blood tests show

If you're not feeling well and your doctor isn't sure why, he or she may order lab tests to help better understand what's going on inside your body. One test they may order is a fasting lab test. Before this blood test, you may be asked to stop eating or drinking for a few hours before. While not all lab tests require it, some tests require fasting for the most accurate results. Most of the time, this means you'll be asked to stop having any food or liquid between eight to 24 hours before your lab test or bloodwork, depending on the test. When would I need a fasting lab test? If you have one or more of these symptoms, your doctor may order a fasting lab test. Excessive urination and thirst Swollen feet and ankles A high blood pressure reading A yellowish tint to your skin and/or eyes Fatigue and an irregular heartbeat Pale skin and leg cramps Non-specific symptoms that are difficult to diagnose If you're having symptoms that just don't feel right, call or visit your doctor so they can request the appropriate tests. If I need a fasting blood test, am I allowed to eat or drink anything? Some tests let you have a few sips of water. However, other tests don't even allow water. You should avoid coffee and gum before a fasting lab test because both substances affect your digestive system and can change the results of your test. You should also avoid alcohol, smoking and exercise. If you take medications, continue taking them as normal unless your doctor says otherwise. If you take vitamin/mineral supplements, ask your doctor whether you should continue to take those. Why do I have to fast? Food and drinks can affect your results because sugar, fats, enzymes, minerals and cholesterol all absorb into your blood stream. Affected results could then lead to an inaccurate diagnosis. These are some conditions you may be tested for that can require a fasting lab test: Anemia (iron blood test) Diabetes (blood glucose test) Electrolyte disorder (metabolic test) High cholesterol (blood cholesterol test or lipid profile) Kidney function (renal function panel) Liver disease (gamma-glutamyl transferase test) Vitamin B12 levels What happens if I don't fast before a blood test? If you don't fast before a test that requires it, the results may not be accurate. If you forget and eat or drink something, call your doctor or lab and ask if the test can still be done. They can then tell you if you need to reschedule your test. It's important to follow fasting instructions before a lab test because a wrong or inaccurate test can lead to more health problems or missed diagnoses. Be honest with your doctor or lab technician if you mistakenly ate or drank. Don't wait until the day of your blood test to ask if you should fast as some tests require you to fast for 12 hours or more. Thus, you'll want to know if your test requires fasting with enough time to follow the fasting instructions. When can I eat or drink after my lab test? Once you've had your blood drawn, you can eat and/or drink anything immediately. In fact, it's a good idea to bring a snack or drink to your appointment. You may also want to schedule your blood test for the early morning to minimize the length of time you'll go without food. When will I get the test results? Most fasting lab results are available for your doctor in about 24 hours. However, some tests may take longer to complete. The lab will provide a report to your doctor, and your doctor will use the report to help with next steps in your diagnosis and treatment. Learn more about the lab services we offer at Bon Secours. URL of this page: If your health care provider has told you to fast before a blood test, it means you should not eat or drink anything, except water, for several hours before your test. When you eat and drink normally, those foods and beverages are absorbed into your bloodstream. That could affect the results of certain types of blood tests. The most common types of tests that require fasting include: Glucose tests, which measure blood sugar. One type of glucose test is called a glucose tolerance test. For this test you will need to fast for 8 hours before the test. When you arrive at the lab or health care facility, you will: Have your blood tested Drink a special liquid containing glucose Have your blood re-tested one hour later, two hours later and possibly three hours later Glucose tests are used to diagnose diabetes. You usually need to fast for 8-12 hours before a test. Most tests that require fasting are scheduled for early in the morning. That way, most of your fasting time will be overnight. No. Juice, coffee, soda, and other beverages can get in your bloodstream and affect your results. In addition, you should not: These activities can also affect your results. But you can drink water. It's actually good to drink water before a blood test. It helps keep more fluid in your veins, which can make it easier to draw blood. Ask your health care provider. Most of the time it's OK to take your usual medicines, but you may need to avoid certain medicines, especially if they need to be taken with food. Tell your health care provider before your test. He or she can reschedule the test for another time when you are able to complete your fast. As soon as your test is over. You may want to bring a snack with you, so you can eat right away. Be sure to talk to your health care provider if you have any questions or concerns about fasting. You should talk to your provider before taking any lab test. Most tests don't require fasting or other special preparations. For others, you may need to avoid certain foods, medicines, or activities. Taking the right steps before testing helps ensure your results will be accurate. Thank you for your question about the need of fasting when undergoing blood tests. A 2012 study showed that there was, indeed, minimal difference between a fasting and non-fasting cholesterol blood test. Whilst this stands true, it doesn't apply to all the other tests that may require fasting. A fasting blood test allows for your doctor to have a snapshot of your body without external interference from food, medication and other factors (you might be asked not to smoke or drink alcohol prior to some tests). With a cholesterol blood test, levels of two types of cholesterol are measured: high-density lipoprotein (HDL) and low-density lipoprotein (LDL). These are both types of lipids. The study shows that there was no significant difference in the observed levels of HDL and LDL between fasting and non-fasting tests. The issue lies with the fact that the testing of cholesterol is often done in conjunction with tests for other lipids, namely triglycerides. These can be affected by food, to the extent that your doctor might feel the need to recommend dietary/lifestyle changes if levels are outside the healthy range. If your main concern is the cholesterol you might be able to disregard the fasting factor. However, other tests, such as blood-glucose, triglycerides will most certainly require a fasting period to portray an accurate snapshot of your body. As a rule of thumb our recommendation is for you to follow your GP recommendations. Reference 2012 Article about Cholesterol testing Fasting vs Non Fasting High Cholesterol - NHS factsheet Answered by the Health at Hand team Thanks for visiting. Don't miss your FREE gift. The Best Diets for Cognitive Fitness, is yours absolutely FREE when you sign up to receive Health Alerts from Harvard Medical School Sign up to get tips for living a healthy lifestyle, with ways to fight inflammation and improve cognitive health, plus the latest advances in preventative medicine, diet and exercise, pain relief, blood pressure and cholesterol management, and more. Written by Tim Jewell — Updated on July 24, 51106Regular blood testing is one of the most important ways to keep track of your overall physical well-being.Getting tested at routine intervals can allow you to see the way your body changes over time and empower you to make informed decisions about your health.Your doctor will typically recommend that you get routine blood work at least once a year, around the same time as your yearly physical.But this is the bare minimum. There are several major reasons you may want to get blood tests more often than that:You're experiencing unusual, persistent symptoms. These could include anything from fatigue to abnormal weight gain to new pain.You want to optimize your health. Knowing levels of various blood components, such as HDL and LDL cholesterol, can allow you to tweak your diet or fitness plan to minimize unhealthy habits (that you may not even realize are unhealthy). This can also maximize the nutrients you put in your body and more.You want to reduce your risk of disease or complications. Regular blood tests can catch the warning signs of almost any disease early. Many heart, lung, and kidney conditions can be diagnosed using blood tests.Talk to your doctor first if you want to get certain tests more often than once a year.Everything you eat and drink contains vitamins, proteins, and other nutrients that can cause the related levels in your blood to temporarily spike or drop.Fasting for 8-12 hours helps ensure that blood test results are free from these variables, making your test results as accurate as possible.Some common tests that may require fasting include:cholesterol testsblood sugar testsliver function testskidney function testsbasic metabolic panelglucose testsResults may take anywhere from a few hours to a few days to become available. Here's an overview of how long some common tests may take:complete blood count (CBC): 24 hoursbasic metabolic panel: 24 hourscomplete metabolic panel: 24-72 hourslipid panel: 24 hours.This can depend on the specific lab where you get tested or how many tests you get done at once. If you order multiple tests, you may not get the complete results until all of the tests are completed.Sometimes a lab will only release results to your doctor, who reviews them and then releases them to you.Your doctor typically orders blood tests for you during a physical, checkup, or an appointment intended for a specific condition.Blood testing is usually partially or fully covered by insurance. Ordering tests through your medical provider ensures that you're not paying too much. Your doctor can also advise you on how to choose testing facilities that are reliable, well-managed, or convenient for you.It's possible to order your own blood tests without a doctor or even health insurance, but it's not recommended. You may end up paying the full cost by not going through an insurance plan, which can be expensive.And some blood testing facilities may not give you accurate results. One infamous case of this is Theranos, a Palo Alto, California, biotechnology firm shut down in 2018 when an investigation uncovered lies and fraud around the accuracy of its private blood testing technology.Let's take a closer look at tests for adults to have done regularly.1. Complete blood countA routine complete blood count (CBC) test checks for levels of 10 different components of every major cell in your blood: white blood cells, red blood cells, and platelets. Important components measured by this test include red blood cell count, hemoglobin, and hematocrit.Here's the typical range of results:Abnormal levels of these components may indicate:nutritional deficiencies, such as vitamin B-6 or B-12iron deficiencybone marrow issuesissue inflammationinfectionheart conditionscancerBased on your results, your doctor will order follow-up tests to confirm abnormal levels and a possible diagnosis.2. Basic metabolic panelA basic metabolic panel (BMP) checks for levels of certain compounds in the blood, such as:electrolytescalciumglucosesodiumpotassiumcarbon dioxidechlorideblood urea nitrogen (BUN)creatinineThis test requires you to fast for at least eight hours before your blood is drawn.See our chart for normal results.Abnormal results may indicate kidney disease, diabetes, or hormone imbalances. Your doctor will perform follow-up tests to diagnose any of these conditions.3. Complete metabolic panelA complete metabolic panel (CMP) includes all the measurements of a BMP as well as additional proteins and substances related to liver function:The same conclusions can be drawn from a CMP as from a BMP for the same substances that a BMP covers. Other abnormal levels can also indicate underlying conditions, such as:4. Lipid panelThis test checks levels of two types of cholesterol:HDL is "good" because it removes harmful substances from your blood and helps the liver break them down into waste. LDL is "bad" because it can cause plaque to develop in your arteries, increasing your risk of heart disease.You need to fast for at least 8 hours before this test.Here are the ranges for each type:Normal levels can also vary by age.5. Thyroid panelA thyroid panel, or thyroid function test, checks how well your thyroid is producing and reacting to certain hormones, such as:Triiodothyronine (T3). Along with T4, this regulates your heart rate and body temperature.T3 resin uptake (RU). This measures how well a hormone called thyroxin-binding globulin is binding.Thyroxine (T4). Along with T3, this regulates your metabolism and how you grow.Thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH). This helps regulate the levels of hormones your thyroid releases.Your thyroid, a tiny gland in your neck, helps regulate bodily functions like your mood, energy level, and overall metabolism.Here are normal results:T3:100-200 nanograms per deciliter of blood (ng/dL)T3RU:depends on T3 levels (will be low if T3 levels are high, and vice versa)T4: 5.0-12.0 micrograms per deciliter (µg/dL)TSH:0.4-4.0 milli-international units per liter of blood (mIU/L)Abnormal levels of these hormones can indicate numerous conditions, such as low protein levels, thyroid growth disorders, and abnormal levels of testosterone or estrogen.6. Enzyme markersEnzymes are proteins that help your body accomplish certain chemical processes, such as breaking down food and clotting blood. They're used throughout your body for many vital functions. Abnormal enzyme levels can indicate many different conditions.Common enzymes tested include:Creatine phosphokinase (CPK-1). This is found in your lungs and brain. High levels can indicate brain injuries or cancer.CPK-2 (CK-MB). These enzymes are found in your heart. They often increase in your blood after a heart attack or other heart injury.CPK-3. These enzymes are also found in your heart. They often result from muscle inflammation, injury, or intense exercise.Troponin. This is a heart enzyme that can leak into your blood and results from heart injury.Here are the normal ranges for the enzyme listed above:CPK-1:about 200 units per liter (U/L)CPK-2:5-25 international units per liter (IU/L)CPK-3:about 200 U/Ltroponin:< 0.02 ng/mL7. Sexually transmitted disease testsMany sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) can be diagnosed using a blood sample. These tests are often combined with urine samples or swabs of infected tissue for more accurate diagnoses.The following STDs can be diagnosed with blood tests:chlamydiaгонorrheaherpesHIVsyphilisBlood tests aren't always accurate right after contracting an infection. For an HIV infection, for example, you may need to wait at least a month before a blood test can detect the virus.8. Coagulation panelCoagulation tests measure how well your blood clots and how long it takes for your blood to clot. Examples include the prothrombin time (PT) test and fibrinogen activity test.Clotting is a crucial process that helps your stop bleeding after a cut or wound. But a clot in a vein or artery can be deadly, blocking blood flow to your brain, heart, or lungs and causing heart attack or strokes.Coagulation test results vary based on your health and any underlying conditions that may affect clotting.Results from this test can be used to diagnose:9. DHEA-sulfate serum testThe dehydroepiandrosterone (DHEA) hormone comes from your adrenal glands. This test measures whether it's too high or too low.In men, DHEA helps develop traits like body hair growth, so low levels are considered abnormal. In women, high levels can cause typically male traits, like excess body hair, to develop, so low levels are normal.Low levels in men are called DHEA deficiency, which can be caused by:type 2 diabeteskidney diseaseanorexia nervosaAIDSHigh levels in men or women can result from:10. C-reactive protein testC-reactive protein (CRP) is made by your liver when tissues in your body are inflamed. High CRP levels indicate inflammation from a variety of causes, including:The higher the level in your results, the higher your risk of heart disease:< 1 mg/L: low risk1-2.9 mg/L: intermediate risk> 3 mg/L: high risk> 10 mg/L: extremely high risk, and further testing should be done to diagnose high levels of inflammation in your bodyThese procedures are usually done at a laboratory or in a doctor's office and take a few minutes.To perform a blood test, a nurse or technician:Cleans the area on your arm where they'll draw the blood from.Ties a rubber band to your upper arm to help make your veins more visible.Puts a needle attached to a tube gently into a vein to draw blood.Removes the needle from the skin and takes the rubber band off your arm when the collection is complete.Covers the drawing site with a bandage or clean cotton and medical tape.The risks of routine blood tests are very low, but can include:slight pain or discomfort when the needle goes infainting from blood lossvein punctureBlood tests offer an important snapshot of your overall health. They're also a good way to catch illness or disease early or see how well your body responds to treatments for various conditions.Get routine blood tests done at least once a year. Talk to your doctor to learn if there are any other tests you may need to ensure your optimal health.

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