

Instructions when Fasting for your Blood Test

Pathology Patient Information

Cholesterol and Triglycerides

You will be having a blood sample taken to test for the level of cholesterol, LDL-cholesterol, HDL-cholesterol and triglyceride in your blood. Measurement of LDL (Low Density Lipoprotein) requires a 12-hour fast - meaning that you must not eat or drink anything that has calories for 12 hours before your blood is drawn. This is because LDL is usually calculated from the results of other tests, including triglycerides that require fasting.

Types of cholesterol

Cholesterol is transported around the body in the blood attached to a protein. This combination of fat and protein is called a lipoprotein. Lipoproteins can be high density (HDL) or low density (LDL) depending on how much protein there is in relation to fat.

LDL (Low Density Lipoprotein)

Most of the body's cholesterol is transported as LDL. This is made up of mostly fat and a small amount of protein. Too much LDL in the blood can cause cholesterol deposits to build up in the arteries, making it harder for the blood to flow through these blood vessels. High levels of LDL in the blood are associated with an increased risk of Cardio Vascular Disease (CVD). So LDL is sometimes referred to as "bad cholesterol".

HDL (High Density Lipoprotein)

A small amount of cholesterol is transported as HDL, which is mostly made up of protein and a small amount of fat. HDL actually helps prevent cholesterol deposits building up in the arteries. Having low levels of HDL (compared with LDL) in the blood is associated with an increased risk of CVD. So HDL is sometimes referred to as "good cholesterol". Women tend to have higher levels of HDL cholesterol than men.



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Triglycerides

Triglycerides are a different type of fat, which mostly come from fats in your food. Energy that is eaten and not used immediately is converted into triglycerides and transported to fat cells for storage. This is an important source of stored energy.

Glucose

The fasting blood test, also known as a fasting blood sugar (FBS) or blood sugar level test, measures the amount of glucose in the bloodstream. It is used primarily to screen for diabetes and to monitor hyperglycemia (too much glucose) or hypoglycemia (not enough glucose). Glucose comes from carbohydrate foods. It is the main source of energy used by the body. Insulin is a hormone that helps your body use and control the amount of glucose in your blood. Insulin is produced in the pancreas and released into the blood when the amount of glucose in the blood rises. Normally, your blood glucose levels increase slightly after you eat. This increase causes your pancreas to release insulin so that your blood glucose levels do not get too high.

Please note that for a glucose tolerance test, you will need to stay in the department for two or more hours (depending on the specific test your doctor ordered), so you may want to bring a book while you wait.

Instructions

You have been asked to fast for your test. If your Consultant/GP has asked for both these blood tests the phlebotomist will only have to take blood once from your arm. She then separates the blood into specific bottles from which the blood is tested by the pathology laboratory.

Do not eat or drink anything (except water) for 12 hours before you go to the department to have your blood taken. This usually means from 8 p.m. the previous evening. You may drink water, but no juice, tea or coffee.

Do not smoke, chew gum, or exercise. These may stimulate the digestive system and alter test results

After the specimen is collected, you may resume your normal diet.

Patient Confidentiality

In order to maintain patient confidentiality, The Pathology Laboratory cannot issue results directly to patients or to their relatives, either in person, by telephone or via email. Patients must obtain their results directly from their consultant.

Commonly asked questions about fasting:

Why do I have to fast? Some test values change following the digestion of food. For example, if you eat lots of sugar, your blood sugar will be high. When you are fasting, we get a base result that can be compared over time.

Can I drink water?

Yes, you may drink small amounts of water.

Should I take my medication?

Yes, you should take any medication which has been prescribed to you by your doctor unless your doctor tells you not to.

Can I drink juice?

No.

Can I drink coffee or tea?

No.

Can I chew gum?

No.

Can I smoke?

No. Smoking can affect your test results.

Can I go to my exercise class?

No. Exercise can affect your test results. Chewing gum, smoking and exercise may stimulate the digestive system and alter test results.