

Frequently Asked Questions about Fasting

Question: My doctor told me to fast before I have my blood drawn. What does that mean?

Answer: Fasting means you do not eat or drink anything before you have your blood drawn.

Question: How long do I need to fast?

Answer: Lab tests usually require an 8 hour fast. Your doctor should give you any special instructions about your blood test. Always follow your doctor's instructions, and refer any questions about fasting to him/ her.

Question: Fasting for 8 hours is going to be a problem for me. Is there anything I can do to make it easier?

Answer: Come early in the morning to have your blood collected, and bring a snack to eat after you are done.

Question: Is it really a big deal if I don't fast? Can't my doctor allow for the fact that I didn't?

Answer: Nutrients and ingredients in the items you eat and drink are absorbed into your bloodstream. They could affect the values that are measured by some lab tests. Fasting yields more accurate lab results.

Question: Can I at least have water while I am fasting?

Answer: Unless your doctor told you otherwise, yes- drink lots of water the day before and the morning of your visit. The lab staff will be able to find hydrated veins easier, and will have greater success drawing blood from a hydrated vein.

Question: Should I take my medicine?

Answer: Unless your doctor told you otherwise, take your medications as usual. Ask your doctor if it's ok to take vitamin or mineral supplements.

Question: What tests require fasting?

Answer: Tests that check your blood sugar or cholesterol are the most common tests that require fasting. There are some others, which is why you should clarify whether or not you need to fast with your doctor. We recommend that you don't wait until the day of your visit to confirm if you need to fast or not. That could cause you to have to come back on a different day.

Question: Can I eat before other lab tests?

Answer: If you have confirmed with your doctor that you do not need to fast, then yes, please eat prior to your visit. You should still drink lots of water the day before/ day of your visit.