

How to prepare for a blood test?

Some blood tests will require you to fast beforehand. In these cases, your provider will instruct you not to eat or drink anything, except water, in the hours leading up to the test. Fasting before certain blood tests is important to help make sure that your test results are accurate. The vitamins, minerals, fats, carbohydrates, and proteins that make up all food and beverages can impact blood-level readings, clouding the results of your test.

Not all blood tests will require you to fast beforehand. Blood tests that you will likely need to fast for include:

- blood glucose test
- liver function test
- cholesterol test
- triglyceride level test
- high-density lipoprotein (HDL) level test
- low-density lipoprotein (LDL) level test
- basic metabolic panel
- renal function panel
- lipoprotein panel

If your provider has prescribed a new blood test for you or doesn't mention whether you should fast or for how long, ask them if fasting is required. Some tests, such as a fecal occult blood test, don't require fasting but do limit certain foods. Always follow your provider's advice when preparing for a test.

How long should you fast before a blood test?

The amount of time you need to fast for will vary depending on the test. For most tests, you will be told not to consume anything but water for eight hours leading up to the test. For a few tests, a 12-hour fast may be needed.

Can you drink coffee if you're fasting before a blood test?

Even if you drink it black, coffee can interfere with blood test results. That's because it contains caffeine and soluble plant matter, which might skew your test results.

Coffee is diuretic which can have a dehydrating effect. The less hydrated you are, the harder it can be for the nurse or other medical professional who's doing your blood test to find a vein. This can make the blood test harder or more stressful for you.

Can you drink alcohol if you're fasting before a blood test?

Some blood tests, such as those that assess liver health or triglyceride levels, may require you to not drink any alcohol for a full 24 hours. Trace amounts of alcohol can remain in your bloodstream for several days. If you have any concerns about alcohol consumption, discuss this with your provider when you schedule your test.

Is it OK to drink water before a blood test?

It's fine to drink water before a blood test, unless you're instructed otherwise by your provider. Tap or bottled water are both ok, but seltzer and club soda are off-limits. Carbonated beverages, flavored or otherwise, and tea should not be consumed during a fast.