

Having a Blood Test

Your doctor recommends testing your blood as part of your continuing medical care. A *phlebotomist* – a person trained and certified to draw (collect) blood – provides your care. If you have any concerns or questions about your blood draw, please ask your phlebotomist. Also, please let the staff know if there is anything they can do for you during your visit.

Preparing for Your Blood Test

You do not need to prepare for most blood tests. However, your doctor will tell you if special preparation is needed (see guidelines below).

Your doctor gives you a form called a *requisition* that lists the blood tests ordered for you. Bring this form with you to the blood test.

Special Preparation Guidelines:

- **For Cholesterol, Glucose, and Glycohemoglobin Blood Tests:** You must fast for 12 hours prior to the blood test, unless your doctor tells you otherwise. Fasting means **no** eating or drinking for 12 hours before the test, except water. You may resume your regular diet after the test.
- **For a 3-Hour Glucose Tolerance Test (3-Hour GTT):** Call the Clinical Laboratory at (415) 600-2200 to schedule this test and receive preparation instructions.
- **For Patients Taking Blood-Thinning Medications, such as Heparin or Coumadin (Warfarin):** Tell the phlebotomist before your blood is drawn if you are taking any blood-thinning medications. After your blood is drawn, the phlebotomist applies pressure to the site until no blood is seen on the gauze.

Waiting to Have Your Blood Drawn

Scheduled blood tests are usually done on time. For scheduled and routine testing:

1. Register with the staff when you arrive for your blood test.
2. Wait while a phlebotomist processes your doctor's order.
3. The phlebotomist will call you to have your blood drawn.

The staff works hard to quickly and accurately complete your blood draw, but there may be delays. The staff will keep you informed of any delays. If you have any questions or concerns, please see the greeter at the entrance of the draw site.

Where to Go for Your Blood Draw

Outpatient labs are conveniently located at each of our campuses and downtown San Francisco. With your physician's lab slip, you can undergo any outpatient laboratory test required for diagnostic screening, including blood testing, urinalysis, and microbiological cultures.

- Go to www.cpmc.org/services/labs.html to see locations and hours of our Outpatient Labs.
- Go to www.cpmc.org/visiting for maps and directions.

During Your Blood Test

1. A phlebotomist guides you to an area called a *drawing station* for your privacy.
2. The phlebotomist prepares your arm by wiping the puncture site with alcohol. The alcohol cleans the area to prevent infection.
3. The phlebotomist ties a tourniquet (a wide rubber strip) around your arm.
4. The phlebotomist inserts a thin needle into the vein. You may feel a pinch when the needle is inserted.
5. Once the blood collection tube(s) are filled, the phlebotomist removes the needle.
6. The phlebotomist applies pressure to the puncture site and covers the site with a clean gauze pad.

After Your Blood Test

- There may be some mild bruising around the puncture site. You may remove the clean gauze pad after the test.
- If you are taking blood-thinning medications, the phlebotomist applies additional pressure to the puncture site. You may go home once the bleeding at the puncture site has stopped.

Getting Your Blood Test Results

Blood test results are usually sent to your doctor within 1 - 2 days. However, if your blood test is sent to a reference laboratory, the results are usually sent to your doctor within 5 - 7 days.

When to Call Your Doctor

Call your doctor if you notice any increased bleeding, bruising, pain, or swelling at the puncture site.

More Ways to Learn

- Go to www.cpmc.org/learning.
- Go to www.labtestsonline.org.

Frequently Asked Questions

Question: How do I prepare for my blood test?

Answer: Most blood tests do not require preparation. Your doctor tells you how to prepare for your blood test if needed.

Question: Will I have to wait to have my blood drawn?

Answer: Most blood draws take about 15 minutes. The staff informs you if there are any delays.

Question: Who will draw my blood for the test?

Answer: An experienced and certified phlebotomist draws your blood.

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Note: This information is not meant to replace any information or personal medical advice which you get directly from your doctor(s). If you have any questions about this information, such as the risks or benefits of the treatment listed, please ask your doctor(s).