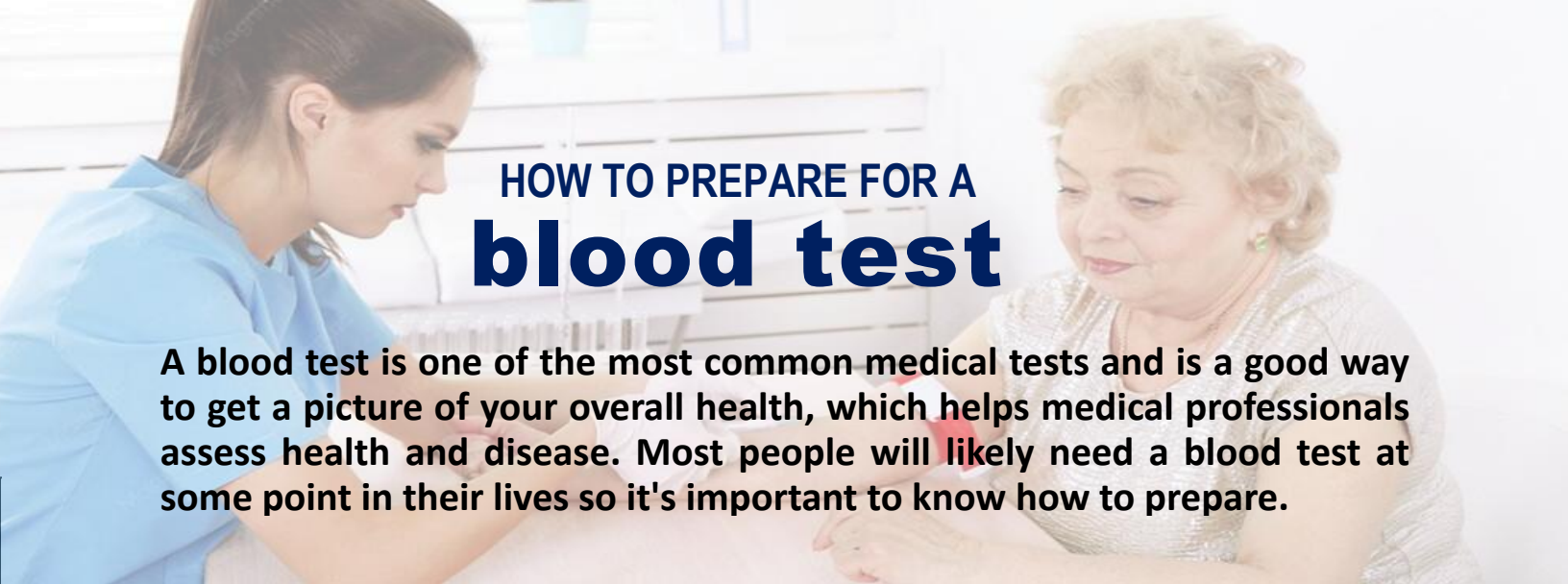




## HOW TO PREPARE FOR A **blood test**

**A blood test is one of the most common medical tests and is a good way to get a picture of your overall health, which helps medical professionals assess health and disease. Most people will likely need a blood test at some point in their lives so it's important to know how to prepare.**

Let's face it, most of us don't enjoy going for a blood test, no matter how simple it is but when you need a blood test, it's important to know what happens and that there are many different types of blood tests.

You will be given specific instructions about your blood test; such as whether you can eat and drink beforehand, or what time of day it needs to be taken. It's in your best interests to follow these instructions carefully because this will affect your results.

### **Should I eat before a blood test?**

If you've been told you need a blood test, you will be informed whether it's a fasting or non-fasting test. If it's a fasting blood test, you'll need to avoid eating and drinking - except water - for a period of time before the test is performed. Your doctor will give you this information ahead of the test.

The most common blood tests can be taken at any time. A good example is a full blood count, which checks the number of red cells, white cells, and platelets.

### **Why do you have to fast for some blood tests but not others?**

Eating and drinking affects the composition of your blood, which is why some blood tests require you to fast beforehand.

Take, for example, your blood glucose level. When we eat, our body releases a hormone called insulin which lowers our sugar (blood glucose) levels and allows our cells to absorb the glucose for energy.

But that has an impact on the body's usual blood glucose level, so it makes it hard for your doctor to get an accurate reading on whether your glucose levels are in a healthy range. That's why you may be asked to fast beforehand to better understand how your body is dealing with sugars. This is often required to test for diabetes.

It's a similar story for other tests that require fasting, as the nutrients you absorb through food and drink can impact the results of your blood test.

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### **Taking medication before your blood test**

If you're taking regular medication you should speak with your doctor about whether it will affect your test results.

In general, you should continue taking your medication as usual if you are having a blood test. If it needs to be stopped or taken at a different time, your doctor will inform you.

### **Feeling faint**

It's not uncommon to feel dizzy, or even to faint, when going for a blood test. And the issue often gets worse if you're scared of needles. If you do feel dizzy or feel you may faint, it's important you tell your doctor. They can make you feel more comfortable or set you up somewhere safe in case you do faint during the test.

Focus on an object in the room and think hard about that one thing. Concentrate on it - focus your mind on this practical thing in front of you and ignore the blood test as much as you can.

If you're someone who is prone to feeling woozy or dizzy once your blood has been taken, it might be worthwhile packing something to eat following the test, provided your doctor says it's OK.

The reason you get a biscuit after donating blood is because it helps get your blood sugar levels back up and will stop you feeling woozy. Packing a bottle of water or juice can also be helpful to replenish the fluid you lost due to the blood test.

## **Who can request a blood test**

**Only GPs can request blood tests, patients can't decide they need one themselves. Your GP will advise you to have a test following a consultation or part of Long-Term Care reviews etc.**