

Fasting for Lab Tests

When you are going to have lab tests performed and are asked to be "fasting", it is recommended that you plan to arrive in the morning hours of the day. This minimizes the waking time that you may be hungry. (Of course if you work a night shift, this advice needs to be altered.) For all common tests, a period of 10-12 hours without food is plenty. So, having dinner on the night before testing any time prior to 9:00pm should be okay if the tests will be performed around 8:00am.

In order for someone to be considered truly fasting, nothing besides water should be consumed during the preceding 10-12 hours, and in fact, it is recommended that a glass or two of water be consumed on the morning of the testing. This should help your veins to be readily seen and blood to flow easily for collection. Drinking some water prior to the testing should also make it easier to provide a urine specimen should that be required.

→ Note that "water" means plain water--not soda water, not Gatorade®, not juice, not milk, not sweet tea, and not a cafe au lait.

If you routinely take any medication in the morning, it is recommended that you take it with water in the usual way that you always do. The exceptions to this are insulin and some diabetes drugs that may cause hypoglycemia (low blood sugar). Do not take these without eating; wait until after the testing is over, and then dose them as you usually would with some food. It is also a good idea to wait to take any meds that you feel tend to upset your stomach until you finish any tests and are cleared to eat something.