



Hospital of St John & St Elizabeth

Health Screening Department

Important Information

Pathology Tests

Department of Pathology & Laboratory Medicine - Additional information for patients & frequently asked questions

When attending for your health assessment you are required to fast over night or for a minimum of 8 hours, (but not more than 14 hours), i.e. **NO FOOD OR DRINK EXCEPT WATER**. Please note that this advice does not apply to those who suffer from diabetes or those who are on a special diet prescribed by their Doctor

'Understanding Your Test Results'

For the majority of tests carried out in laboratories, a numerical value is reported and interpreted based on its relationship to an established reference or 'normal' range. Any abnormal results will be explained in your health screening report.

- **Should I be concerned if a test is abnormal or outside the normal range?**

Generally the further away from the normal range that a result is, i.e. the higher or lower it is, the more likely chance that there is a disease or disease process, although **it is important to realise, that all test results must** be interpreted by your doctor.

However by scientific definition, a normal range encompasses **only 95% of values in a normal population**. So statistically 5% of healthy people will have one or more tests outside the 'normal' or reference range and in the majority of cases, these slightly abnormal results are not significant. There are other factors that can affect a test result such as, age, sex, ethnic origin and drug therapy.

- **Why would I have to have some tests repeated?**

Sometimes a test result will be more than 'slightly abnormal' and both your Doctor and the Laboratory will want to check to see whether the result is significant. Basically this relates to the sensitivity and specificity of a test for a disease. If the test results do not match any clinical symptoms your Doctor may repeat them or order further tests and sometimes these may take a little longer to complete.

Very occasionally a grossly abnormal result is reported by the Laboratory with '**suggest repeat**'. This may be due to contamination, inadequate collection or interference by drugs or nutritional/herbal products.

This checking process of laboratory test results is quite common and in most cases the final report will reveal no abnormality.

- **If all my test results are within the reference range does that mean that everything is ok?**

Generally YES, but not all Laboratory tests are conclusive and sometimes your doctor may need to order additional investigations.

- **My lipids results are abnormal and need to be repeated!**

The commonest reason for these tests to be repeated is due to inadequate fasting, and the finding of a raised triglyceride or glucose result.

Patients should fast overnight or for a minimum of 8 hours.

- **Why do values or reference ranges vary from laboratory to laboratory?**

There are only a few tests, (cholesterol, glucose, Haemoglobin), for which standardised reference ranges have been established. In many cases values will differ from Lab to Lab because each hospital laboratory uses different equipment and methods. Hence they each have to establish their own reference ranges. Your laboratory report will contain the reference range that your lab follows. **Do not compare** results from different laboratories. In addition if your consultant requires you to have regular tests it is best to have these carried out at the same laboratory.

Why we do the tests -----

Urine analysis

It can detect diabetes, kidney disease and presence of blood or urine infection. It examines proteins, sugar, microscopy and culture and can help detect early signs of diabetes, kidney disease, and urinary infection.

Bowel cancer screening test (if you are over 50 years)

Stool test to detect possible early signs of colon or bowel cancer.

Biochemical blood screen including Lipid profile

Biochemical disturbances occur frequently in disease. They can arise and cause disease and at other times indicate disease. A full Biochemical profile can provide much information.

Lipid profile-Cholesterol has many functions in the body and circulates in the blood incorporated into particles, (lipoproteins). The two main lipoproteins which contain cholesterol are LDL, (low density lipoprotein), and HDL, (high density lipoprotein).

High levels of LDL cholesterol are associated with an increased risk of heart disease, whereas HDL levels are inversely correlated with risk, i.e. high HDL levels are beneficial.

Hence BAD cholesterol, LDL; and GOOD cholesterol, HDL.

HDL cholesterol tends to be lower in men than in women, but falls in women after the menopause.

Anaemia

Symptoms include tiredness and poor resistance to infection; a common cause of anaemia is iron deficiency.

PSA – for men over 50 years.

Following a consultation with the doctor, this Prostatic Specific Antigen test can provide information about your risk of prostatic problems, it can detect prostate cancer or just a benign enlarged prostate. (If you are eligible for this test you will be counselled by the doctor first.)