

check IT OUT:

Tests That Can Help Protect Your Heart Health

Ask your doctor to give you these tests. Each one will give you valuable information about your heart disease risk.

Lipoprotein Profile

What: A blood test that measures total cholesterol, “good” and “bad” cholesterol, and triglycerides, another form of fat in the blood. The test is given after a 9- to 12-hour fast.

Why: To find out if you have high blood cholesterol and/or high triglyceride levels. Both are risk factors for heart disease.

When: All healthy adults should have their blood cholesterol levels checked at least once every 5 years. Depending on the results, your doctor may want to repeat the test more frequently.

Blood Pressure

What: A simple, painless test using an inflatable arm cuff.

Why: To find out if you have high blood pressure or prehypertension. Both are risk factors for heart disease.

When: At least every 2 years, or more often if you have high blood pressure or prehypertension.



Fasting Plasma Glucose

What: The preferred test for diagnosing diabetes. After you have fasted overnight, you will get a blood test the following morning.

Why: To find out if you have diabetes or are likely to develop the disease. Fasting plasma glucose levels of more than 126 mg/dL on two tests on different days mean that you have diabetes. Levels between 100 and 125 mg/dL mean that you’re at high risk for developing diabetes. Diabetes is an important risk factor for heart disease and other medical disorders.

When: At least every 3 years, beginning at age 45. If you have risk factors for diabetes, you should be tested at a younger age and more often.

Body Mass Index (BMI) and Waist Circumference

What: BMI is a measure of your weight in relation to your height. Waist circumference is a measure of the fat around your middle.

Why: To find out whether your body type raises your risk of heart disease. A BMI of 25 or higher means you are overweight; a BMI of 30 or higher means you are obese. Both overweight and obesity are risk factors for heart disease. For women, a waist measurement of more than 35 inches increases the risk of heart disease and other serious health conditions.

When: Every 2 years, or more often if your doctor recommends it. There also are several tests that can determine whether you already have heart disease. Ask your doctor whether you need a stress test, an electrocardiogram (EKG or ECG), or another diagnostic test. (See “Screening Tests” on page 96.)