How to Prepare: Blood Tests

A few simple steps make the draw quicker, easier and more accurate:

- ☐ Check whether your test needs fasting. Tests such as fasting glucose are affected by recent food; if fasting is needed it is usually 8–12 hours, with water allowed. If you are unsure, ask the clinic — eating before a fasting test is a common reason for a repeat.
- ☐ Keep drinking water. Being well hydrated makes veins easier to find and the draw quicker.
- ☐ Take your normal medicines unless you are told otherwise — but mention everything you take, including supplements, when you book or arrive.
- ☐ Wear a top with sleeves that roll up easily above the elbow, and keep warm on the way; warm arms have more visible veins.
- ☐ If needles make you faint or anxious, say so when you arrive. You can lie down for the draw, look away, and take your time sitting up afterwards.
- ☐ Bring your test request form or know who ordered the test, and mention any previous difficult draws or bruising problems.

What to expect

Before	You check in, and the person taking the blood — a phlebotomist, nurse or doctor — confirms your identity and the tests requested, and labels the tubes with your details.
During	A needle goes into the vein — a scratch and a brief sting, lasting seconds — and the tubes fill one by one. Most draws take two to five minutes in total. Looking away, breathing slowly and keeping the arm still and relaxed all help.
After	The needle comes out, you press on the spot with cotton wool or gauze for a minute or two, and a small plaster goes on. Keep the arm fairly still for a short while and avoid heavy lifting with it for a few hours to reduce bruising.

Medically reviewed by Dr. Mohamed Ibrahim, MD, PhD — physician-scientist. Last reviewed October 2026.

This handout is general information to help you prepare; it does not replace the instructions from your own care team. If your clinic gave you different instructions, follow theirs.