

## Laboratory Patient Safety Tips:

### **What is Fasting? Does it really matter?**

Some laboratory tests require that you “fast” in order to obtain accurate results. Usually you will need to fast for any tests or panels that include blood fats/lipids (triglycerides, LDL, or HDL) or blood sugar (glucose). It is not necessary to fast for total cholesterol.

Your laboratory professional or other healthcare provider can advise you when it is necessary to fast and for how long you must fast. Generally you must fast longer for blood lipids than with other tests. The average fasting period is 8-12 hrs.

Fasting means you should **NOT**:

- eat any food,
- drink any beverages except plain water
- chew gum
- exercise strenuously during the fasting period
- smoke

You **should** drink a glass or two of water during your fast since it's harder to draw the blood if you are dehydrated.

You should **not** stop your normal medications unless told to do so by your doctor.

### **Fasting FAQs:**

#### **Can I have black unsweetened coffee during my fast?**

No, the caffeine in coffee and other beverages can temporarily raise blood sugar levels.

#### **Why can't I exercise?**

Exercise can raise your cholesterol and also affects blood sugar.

#### **But smoking – that's not food?**

Smoking can raise “bad” cholesterol and can raise your blood insulin, changing blood sugar levels.

#### **Surely sugar free gum won't matter?**

Fasting means no calories, and sugar free gum may have calories. Gum also stimulates your digestive system and may affect test results. Same goes for sugar free beverages.

#### **What if I slip up and have something I shouldn't?**

Discuss it right away with your health care professional. Most likely you will need to repeat your fast and return on a different day to get accurate results.

#### **Do I need to fast for just a total cholesterol?**

Fasting is not necessary for total cholesterol, but is necessary if you have HDL, LDL or triglycerides done.