

for parents

[Home](#) | [Parents](#) | [Kids](#) | [Teens](#)



SEARCH

Teachers!
Need health lessons?

Children's
Health News

General Health

Infections

Emotions & Behavior

Growth & Development

Nutrition & Fitness

Recipes

Pregnancy & Newborns

Medical Problems

Q&A

Positive Parenting

First Aid & Safety

Doctors & Hospitals

In the News

En español

Read our
Articles
in Spanish!

Blood Test: Lipid Panel

KidsHealth > Parents > Doctors & Hospitals > Medical Tests & Exams > Blood Test: Lipid Panel

What It Is

By ordering a test called a lipid panel for your child, the doctor is taking a look at the different kinds of fats in the blood. While many parents don't think about the level of their child's cholesterol, high levels are known to be contributors to heart disease and strokes. Doctors take a close look at lipid panels in kids because heart disease has been shown to develop in childhood.

A lipid panel measures:

- **total cholesterol**, which is the sum of the different types of cholesterol
- **high-density lipoproteins (HDL)**, commonly called "good" cholesterol. Lipoproteins can be thought of as your child's blood transportation system. High-density lipoproteins carry cholesterol to the liver to be eliminated.
- **low-density lipoproteins (LDL)**, commonly known as "bad" cholesterol. LDLs that build up in the bloodstream can clog blood vessels and increase the risk of heart disease.
- **triglycerides**, which store energy until the body needs it. If the body holds on to too many triglycerides, blood vessels can get clogged and cause health problems.

ARTICLE

RELATED ARTICLES

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



Why It's Done

The lipid panel checks the lipid levels in blood, which can indicate a person's risk for heart disease or atherosclerosis (a hardening, narrowing, or blockage of the arteries).

Some experts think that high cholesterol in kids is a major under-reported public health problem. So it's important to be aware of your child's cholesterol levels, especially if either parent has high cholesterol.

Preparation

Lipid levels can be affected by fat in the diet. Your child should avoid eating fatty foods the evening before the test. Unless otherwise instructed by your doctor, your child shouldn't eat or drink anything other than water after midnight the night before the test. Failing to do so could affect the test results.

Your child should also avoid any exercise 12 to 14 hours before the test. Check with your doctor to see if you should discontinue any medications your child is taking until after the test is done.

The Procedure

Blood will be taken from a vein. After the skin surface is cleaned with antiseptic, an elastic band is placed around the upper arm to apply pressure and cause the vein to swell with blood. A needle is inserted into a vein (usually in the arm inside of the elbow or the back of the hand) and blood is withdrawn and collected in an airtight vial or syringe. During the procedure, the elastic band is removed. Once the blood has been collected, the needle is gently removed and the puncture site covered with cotton or a bandage to stop the bleeding. The entire test will only take a few minutes.

What to Expect

Collecting a sample of blood is only temporarily uncomfortable and feels like a slight pinprick. Afterward, there may be some minor bruising, which should go away in a day or so.

Getting the Results

Test results should be available within a few days to a week. Your doctor will want to discuss the results and any concerns with you.

Risks

Obtaining a blood test such as a lipid panel test is considered safe. However, as with many medical tests, there are some small risks, including:

- fainting or feeling lightheaded
- hematoma (blood accumulating under the skin)
- pain associated with multiple punctures to locate a vein

Helping Your Child

Having a blood test is relatively painless. Still, many kids are afraid of needles. Explaining the test in terms your child can understand might help ease some of the fear.

Allow your child to ask the technician questions. Tell your child to try to relax during the procedure, as tense muscles can make it harder and more painful to draw blood. It also may help for your child to look away when the needle is being inserted into the skin.

If You Have Questions

If you have questions about the lipid panel test, contact the doctor. You can also talk to the technician before the test.

Reviewed by: Kate M. Cronan, MD

Date reviewed: September 2008



Printer-friendly version



Email this article to a
friend



Send email to us