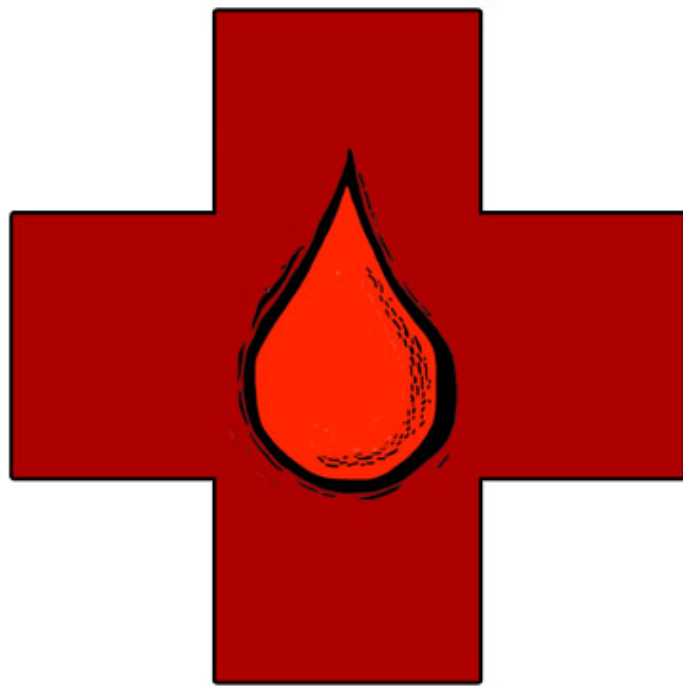


Dr. Karen Vieira

How A Blood Test Can Save Your Life



Using a blood test to discover
problematic symptoms before
they develop into disease

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Add Blood Tests into Your Routine Healthcare

When you think about routine healthcare, the first things that come to mind are probably dental checkups, pap smears, mammograms, blood pressure readings, mole checks and, of course, regular physicals. Many people don't put blood tests into this category.

However, your blood says a lot about you. Having routine blood tests done will keep you doctor informed about any medical conditions you might have and can alert you to any problems even before the onset of symptoms. Many conditions, if detected early enough, can be easily fixed. Waiting until major symptoms are present might be too late, and more drastic measures will probably have to be taken at that point.



Some Conditions Diagnosed Early Via a Blood Test

- **Diabetes** – Diabetes is a disease where your body can not process sugar properly. If left unchecked, it can lead to blindness, limb amputation and even death. By getting regular blood work done, your doctor can diagnose pre-diabetes which can be controlled with diet and exercise.
- **Heart disease** – High cholesterol, triglycerides and homocysteine can lead to serious heart problems if left unchecked. By catching rising levels early, the problem can be reversed with some dietary changes. Wait too long and you could face more serious problems such as a heart attack or other potentially fatal conditions.
- **Poor nutrition** – Nutritional deficiencies can lead to many serious diseases. Anemia and a thyroid condition are two of the more common diseases associated with poor nutrition. As with the previous conditions, if detected before serious damage occurs, the resolution can be as easy as education to improve dietary choices to reverse the effects of malnutrition.
- **Tumors or cancer** – Unexplained abnormal levels of liver enzymes can alert doctors to a tumor in the liver before any symptoms are present. This will allow the doctor to recommend a course of action while the tumor is small and easier to remove. It can also reduce the need for high levels of chemotherapy or radiation and ensure a greater chance of remission. This is also true of other tumors or cancers, especially leukemia. Abnormal white blood cell counts and/or platelet counts are good indicators that something is wrong with the blood and a likely culprit is leukemia. If treated early, the need for invasive procedures is lessened and the chance of total remission is great.
- **Infections** – If left untreated, infections can spread and cause serious problems. Regular blood tests will give your doctor information regarding any infections that you might have, the type they are and the best method for treating them.

- **Anemia** – Anemia can be a symptom of many different problems such as kidney disease or uncontrolled bleeding. Not only will a blood test alert your doctor to any signs of anemia, but will help him determine the cause so you can work together to come up with a solution.

With regular blood testing, you will be better informed about your health and can quickly fix any problems that might arise. The ability to fight disease early, before symptoms even start, will keep you healthy for a very long time.

Making Sense of How You Currently Feel

Getting a blood test can also make sense of any vague symptoms you might be feeling. If you have been getting your blood checked on a regular basis, you will have a baseline of healthy results. Then if there is a time where you are not feeling well but have no defined symptoms, you can go in for a blood test and when the levels are checked against your normal, even if they are within normal ranges, a guess can be made as to the cause of your symptoms. There are certain symptoms that you can be on the lookout for that should cause you to go to the doctor for a blood test. These symptoms include:

- **Unexplained tiredness** – Exhaustion can be a symptom of anemia, thyroid problems, or even pregnancy. A blood test can confirm any of these conditions, and if they are not the cause of the extreme tiredness they can be ruled out with a quick blood test.
- **Inability to lose weight** – The inability to lose weight even while following a diet and exercise program can indicate a thyroid condition. The hormone that is produced by the thyroid controls your metabolism and if it is not working properly, one of the symptoms can be the inability to lose weight. Another cause of difficulty losing weight can be a hormonal imbalance with male, female or stress hormones.
- **Unexplained weight loss** – Large amounts of weight loss without exercise or a dietary program is a symptom of diabetes. Your doctor can test your blood sugar levels to determine if your body is not producing insulin properly and can recommend the proper treatment.
- **Low fever** - A low fever can be due to an infection. If this is the case and the infection is not treated it can spread quickly causing increasingly serious complications. A blood test can confirm the presence of an infection and allow the proper medications to be given to cure the problem.

If you are experiencing any of these symptoms, or other unexplained issues, a trip to the doctor is in order. Getting your blood tested can give the doctor a good

indication of the cause of your symptoms and allow him the opportunity to come up with the proper treatment.

Your blood is a good indicator of everything that is going on with your body. It can point your doctor to the cause of vague symptoms and can alert to a problem even when you are feeling fine. By catching any diseases early, you and your physician will be able to return your body to its healthy state with minimum effort. The chances for total recovery increase greatly when conditions are not allowed to grow or spread. Talk to your doctor about adding a regularly scheduled blood test to your health care regimen and if you haven't had a blood test in the past year, schedule one today.

Where to Go For Your Blood Test

The best way to get your blood tested is to call your primary care physician to schedule a blood draw. Some people may not have a family doctor that they see, for one reason or another. If you are one of those people and you are not interested or able to get your blood test scheduled with a doctor, there are many other options available.



- If you have health insurance, contact your insurance company or visit their website to see what your options are that will be covered by your insurance. Their preference may be via a doctor or directly at an independent lab.
- A free or low cost option, depending on your income, is to make an appointment for a blood test at your state health department's local branch. Search online or in a phone book to see the closest location to you.
- Contact an urgent care clinic near you to schedule an appointment for your blood test. Many do not even require an appointment.
- Arrange your blood test through one of the many online blood test companies such as EconoLABS, Private MD Labs, PrePaidLab or Health Testing Centers. **Note:** I have never used any of these companies and therefore cannot personally endorse any of them or attest to their prices or service.

Things to Know Before You Have Your Blood Tested

There are two things you need to ask your doctor, clinic or lab prior to the day you are scheduled to have your blood drawn:

1. Is your blood test to be done while you are fasting? And if so, what are their rules for fasting?
2. Should you take your normal medications, vitamins and supplements on the day of your blood test?

A few tips for getting the most meaningful and accurate blood test results possible:

- If your blood test is a fasting test, make sure to follow the rules you are given before the blood test in order to get an accurate result. This generally means you cannot eat or drink anything but water for 10 to 12 hours before your test.
- Don't drink alcohol for 24 hours before your test.
- Avoid fatty foods in the last meal you eat before your test.
- Give your doctor a list of all prescription and over-the-counter medications you take, plus all vitamins and supplements.

What to Do With Your Blood Test Results

Once your blood test results are completed by the lab, you should receive a copy. If you don't, contact your doctor or lab and ask for a copy – it is your right as a patient to receive one.

Your doctor may go over the blood test results with you and tell you about anything that he/she finds to be of concern. You may be prescribed medication, further testing, recommended to make lifestyle changes or whatever your doctor thinks is necessary.

The analysis of your blood test results shouldn't end there though. The first thing to do is to find your prior blood test results, if you have any, and compare this one to your last one. That reveals any changes, both good and bad, and will let you know if your health is improving or declining.

Next, line by line, go through your results and understand any areas that are abnormal or not optimal. Figure out what may be causing these results and what you can do about it. This may warrant another visit to your doctor to discuss it with him/her. If any of your test results are worrisome you may want to consider having the test repeated to confirm the result.

I have written a report to help you with this process, called *Blood Tests Decoded*. Order that report now so you fully understand your results and can take some proactive next steps to take to improve your health.