Simple Questions to Ask Your Doctor About Heart Health Testing

Testing can provide important information about your heart and blood vessels. Some tests are part of routine care, while others may be recommended based on your personal risk factors, symptoms, or family history.

Not everyone needs additional testing. Talking with your doctor can help you decide whether further testing may be helpful.

1

Do I have risk factors that might require additional testing?

Some people benefit from additional testing based on their personal health history or family history of heart disease.

You might ask:

- → Based on my health history, do I have risk factors for heart or vascular disease?
- → Does my family history increase my risk?
- → Would additional testing provide a clearer picture of my cardiovascular risk?

2

What type of heart health testing might be helpful for me?

Different tests evaluate specific aspects of heart health, such as plaque in the arteries, blood flow to the heart, or how well the heart muscle works.

You might ask:

- → What type of test would provide the most useful information about my heart or arteries?
- → Would tests like a coronary calcium scan or other imaging tests be appropriate for me?
- → What would this test show that routine tests don't?

3

What are you looking for with this test?

Understanding the purpose of a test can help you make sense of the results.

You might ask:

- → What specific problem or condition are we trying to detect with this test?
- → Are you looking for plaque in my arteries, changes in blood flow, or changes in heart function?
- → How will the results help clarify my risk?

4

How would the results change my care?

Testing is most helpful when the results guide treatment or prevention decisions.

You might ask:

- → If the test shows higher risk, what would we do differently?
- → Would the results affect medications or other treatment decisions?
- → Could the results change how we approach prevention?

5

Should my family members consider testing?

Some cardiovascular risk factors are inherited and may affect family members.

You might ask:

- → If my results show higher risk, should my family members be tested?
- → Are there inherited conditions we should look for?
- → Would family members benefit from screening?

Types of Tests Used to Evaluate Heart Health

Blood tests

(measure substances in the blood linked to heart health)

- → Lipid panel (cholesterol)
- → Lipoprotein(a) [Lp(a)]
- → Apolipoprotein B (ApoB)
- → hsCRP
- → Blood sugar tests (glucose or HbA1c)

Imaging or heart tests

(create images of the heart or arteries)

- → Coronary artery calcium (CAC) scan
- → Echocardiogram
- → Stress testing
- → Carotid ultrasound

Your doctor will decide which tests are appropriate based on your health history.

For more educational resources about cardiovascular health, visit Vasculearn Network at thrombosis.org.