Outpatient Laboratory Testing Questions & Answers

Q: How do I prepare for my laboratory test(s)?
A: Your physician should provide you with written instructions for preparing for your test(s) and explain why he or she wanted you to have the test(s). Many lab tests do not require special preparation but some do. Preparations usually include fasting (not eating any or certain foods) for several hours or even overnight, drinking more or less water than usual, and avoiding certain medications or vitamin and herbal supplements before the test.

- If you are delivering a specimen to the lab, there might be special instructions for transporting the specimen. Follow your lab instructions exactly as they are written by your physician.
- If you are not certain if special preparation is required, or if you have questions about the instructions you were given, contact your physician’s office.
- If you think you have not followed the test preparation instructions from your physician properly, let the receptionist or laboratory technician know before you are tested.

Q: What should I expect during my laboratory test(s)?
A: Lab tests involve the collection of a specimen (a small amount of a body fluid such as blood or urine, or a stool sample) and then testing it for various components. Depending on the type of study required, you may have a needle stick so we can collect a blood sample or you may be asked to use our private restroom to provide a urine sample. Regardless of the type of exam, our medical staff will make sure you are as comfortable as possible during the specimen collection, ensure that all safety precautions are followed and give you as much privacy as possible.

Q: What should I do after my laboratory test(s)?
A: After your specimen is collected, it is taken to our lab processing area, where our certified laboratory technicians and physicians will examine it and produce a written report of your test(s).

- For blood tests: A bandage may be placed on the area where the needle was inserted. You may be asked to apply pressure to the area.
- If you have not eaten today, you may resume your normal diet.
- Avoid strenuous exercise after your blood draw.
- Avoid heavy lifting using the blood draw arm for the rest of the day.
- If you are taking a blood thinner such as Coumadin® (warfarin) or aspirin, leave the bandage in place for at least four hours.
- If you are not taking a blood thinner or aspirin, you can remove the bandage after one hour.
- Call the contact number at the bottom of the page if you feel pain or see redness, swelling or discharge from the puncture site.
Q: When will my laboratory results be available?

A: It depends on the type of study being performed.

- Results from most common blood and urine tests are available within 24 hours.
- Tests not performed at the hospital may take a week or longer.
- Microbiology results (urine, blood, and stool cultures) are usually available within three days.
- Twenty-four hour urine test results are not available until 48 hours after the urine sample is returned for testing. Sometimes, special 24-hour urine tests are sent offsite to be analyzed and may take a week or longer before results are available.

The laboratory cannot provide you with your test results. Please contact your physician directly for results. If your physician is on staff at Mount Sinai Medical Center, your results will display in our electronic records system as soon as they become available. You may also contact our Medical Records department at (305) 674-2320 to obtain a copy of your results.

If you have questions about your lab tests after you leave the outpatient center, or you feel pain or see redness, swelling or discharge from the puncture site, please call the Mount Sinai Medical Center Control Center at (305) 674-2261 and ask to speak with the supervisor.