

Know Your Risk

for Long-Term Inflammation.

High-Sensitivity C-Reactive Protein (hs-CRP)

What is hs-CRP?

C-reactive protein (CRP) is made by the liver when inflammation is present somewhere in your body. A regular CRP test is often used to help your doctor find out if you have an infection. The “hs” stands for “high sensitivity”, which means that this type of CRP blood test can measure extremely low levels of CRP that the regular CRP test can miss.

Why check my hs-CRP?

CRP in our bodies is like water from a sink. When the sink is turned on, a stream of water flows until it is turned off. This is like high levels of CRP that occur in our bodies when we experience something like a cut or cold. Once it resolves, our CRP levels go back to normal.

If the sink continues to drip water after it is turned off, there might be something wrong with the sink or pipes. If the problem isn't fixed, the sink will continue to drip water. hs-CRP is like the water dripping from the sink. It is a lower level of CRP, that suggests there is a different problem to fix.

For example, if cholesterol is building up inside blood vessels, it can lead to high levels of hs-CRP. This provides an early sign of risk for heart and blood vessel disease. Taking care of the cholesterol problem can help lower hs-CRP levels. If the problem isn't addressed, it can lead to a heart attack or stroke.

Your doctor may want to check your hs-CRP levels if you don't have healthy lifestyle habits, if you have poor dental health, or if you have risk factors for heart attacks, such as high cholesterol, high blood pressure, or if you have a history of heart disease. Ask your doctor if this test is right for you.

What can I do to improve my hs-CRP levels?

- **Be sure any known infection is treated and resolved.** (It may take 3-4 weeks for high hs-CRP to come down to a normal level.)
- **Eat a healthy diet.** A heart-healthy, Mediterranean diet - that is low in saturated fat and cholesterol, full of high-fiber foods (such as fresh fruits, vegetables, and whole grains),

and has very little added salt and sugars - can help you control cholesterol levels, blood pressure, and blood sugar.

- **If you smoke, you should quit.** Smoking damages the walls of blood vessels and increases both heart attack and stroke risk, partly because smoking can also make clots form faster and bigger.
- **Be sure to see your dentist regularly,** as dental disease increases the risk of heart attacks.
- **Take your medications,** if told by your doctor, to lower your blood pressure, blood sugar, and/or blood cholesterol levels.

With heart disease being the #1 killer of Americans, it's important to develop a plan with your doctor to lower your risk of a heart attack or stroke *before* one happens.

Additional Need-to-Knows:

The hs-CRP test can be done at the same time you have your standard cholesterol test. When getting ready for the hs-CRP test:

- Keep taking your medications as directed.
- Fasting is not required.

Relative Risk

What do my results mean?

<1.0 Low	Your result is in the desirable range, suggesting that you have low amounts of inflammation in your body.
≥1.0 Moderate/ High	You have moderate/high levels of hs-CRP, suggesting that you may have inflammation in your blood vessels. Your doctor may order a repeat test and/or other lab tests, such as a cholesterol test, to see if there is risk for a heart attack or stroke.

