

Identifying your 'hidden' risk for heart disease How hsCRP can shed some light

What is hsCRP?

C-reactive protein (CRP) is produced by the liver when inflammation is present somewhere in your body. Traditionally, the CRP test has been used to identify risk for infection or chronic inflammatory conditions. Now, there is a newer test available called high-sensitivity CRP, or hsCRP, that measures smaller amounts of CRP in the blood.

Why should I get my hsCRP levels checked?

Most of the time, you can tell if you have inflammation. For example, if you cut your finger, you may see redness and swelling, and feel pain. This is called acute inflammation, or short-term inflammation.

Other times, inflammation in your body may not be so obvious. This type of inflammation may be present for a long period of time without any symptoms. This is called chronic inflammation, or long-term inflammation. This type of inflammation is considered a 'silent killer' as it may occur within the arteries of the heart during the progression of heart disease. The good news is that chronic inflammation can be monitored and prevented by measuring hsCRP levels in your blood.

Researchers have shown that healthy men and women who have high hsCRP levels are more likely to have a heart attack or stroke than those with low hsCRP levels. High hsCRP levels are also a risk factor for people who do not have other risk factors that doctors commonly look for such as high cholesterol or high blood pressure. Even people who already have heart disease can be at higher risk for a second heart attack if their hsCRP level is high.

When should my hsCRP levels be checked?

Your hsCRP level can be checked at the same time your doctor runs other tests, such as a cholesterol test, to determine if you are at increased risk for a heart attack or stroke.

How should I prepare for the hsCRP test?

The hsCRP test does not require any special preparation. You do not need to be fasting, and can be taking medications. Make sure you don't have a cold or the flu when being checked



as hsCRP levels will go up when you're sick. Instead, you should wait until you feel better before you are checked.

What can I do to help lower my hsCRP levels?

Lifestyle changes such as exercising more, eating more heart-healthy high fiber foods such as fruits/vegetables and whole grains or following a Mediterranean diet, quitting smoking, and taking good care of your teeth can all help lower hsCRP and reduce your risk of heart disease. There are prescription and non-prescription medications that also can lower hsCRP. It is important for you to work together with your doctor to come up with a plan that is right for you.

For more information, please visit www.clevelandheartlab.com



Like us on Facebook
www.facebook.com/ClevelandHeartLab



Follow us on Twitter
[@CLEHeartLab](https://twitter.com/CLEHeartLab)