

Name of the test:

Total cholesterol test

Alternative name(s) of the test:

None.

What this test is used for:

This test measures the total amount of cholesterol in the blood. Cholesterol is a very important substance for human body. However, increased levels of cholesterol are associated with increased risk of developing atherosclerosis and heart disease. The total cholesterol test is used to evaluate this risk of cardiovascular disorders.

When the test is ordered:

The test is used as a screening tool - it helps evaluate the risk of developing cardiovascular disease and so it is often performed as a part of a routine health checkup.

In patients who have other known risk factors or who have high cholesterol levels, this test is ordered more frequently. Often other tests are performed as well - LDL and HDL tests.

How this test is performed:

A blood sample is taken from a vein.

How to prepare for the test:

Fasting several hours prior to the test might be needed. Some drugs and conditions can affect the test results. So, it is important to consult your doctor and receive all the necessary instructions.

Interpretation of results:

High total cholesterol levels are associated with increased risk of developing cardiovascular disease. Results of the total cholesterol test alone, are not enough for diagnosis. In fact, this test is not used for diagnostic purposes, but rather it is a screening tool, which helps doctors evaluate the risk of a heart disease.

Interpretation of test results should be done by a doctor and other risk factors (age, obesity, diabetes, smoking, hypertension, family history of heart disease), as well as results from LDL and HDL tests should be taken into consideration in order to correctly estimate the overall risk of cardiovascular disease.