

C-REACTIVE PROTEIN TEST

CRP Levels & Heart Risk ¹	
Risk Category	CRP Level (mg/L)
Low	Less than 1.0
Average	1.0 to 3.0
High	3.0 or more

Patient: What is C-reactive protein?

Doctor: C-reactive protein (CRP) is a blood test marker for inflammation in the body. C-reactive protein is released into the blood by the liver shortly after the start of an infection or inflammation. CRP is an early indicator of these problems because its levels usually start to rise in the blood before symptoms, such as fever and pain, appear.

Patient: What is C - reactive protein test for?

Doctor: C-reactive protein (CRP) is a non-specific test. It is used by a doctor to detect inflammation if there is a high suspicion of tissue injury or infection somewhere in the body. CRP is not a diagnostic of any condition, but it can be used together with signs and symptoms and other tests to evaluate an individual for an acute or chronic inflammatory condition.

Patient: When is it ordered doctor?

Doctor: This test may be ordered when an individual is suspected of having a serious bacterial infection based on their medical history and signs and symptoms. It may be ordered, for example, when a newborn shows signs of infection or when an individual has symptoms of sepsis, such as fever, chills and rapid breathing and heart rate. It may also be ordered on a regular basis to monitor conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis and is often repeated at intervals to determine whether treatment is effective. This is particularly useful for inflammation problems since CRP levels drop as inflammation subsides.

Patient: What are the main causes of an elevated C-reactive protein?

Doctor: In general, the main causes of increased CRP are burns, trauma, infections, inflammation and certain cancers

Patient: Is it a risk factor for cardiovascular disease?

Doctor: Because of the inflammatory component of atherosclerosis, elevated CRP level has been linked with cardiovascular disease. However, it cannot be considered an independent risk factor for cardiovascular disease.

Patient: How is the sample collected for testing?

Doctor: A blood sample is obtained by inserting a needle into a vein in the arm.

Patient: What does the test result mean?

Doctor: The level of CRP in the blood is normally low. A high or increasing amount of CRP in the blood suggests the presence of inflammation but will not identify its location or the condition causing it. In individuals suspected of having a serious bacterial infection, a high CRP suggests the presence of one. In people with chronic inflammatory conditions, high levels of CRP suggest a flare-up or that treatment has not been effective. If the CRP level is initially elevated and drops, then it means that the inflammation or infection is subsiding and/or responding to treatment.

Patient: What are chronic inflammatory diseases?

Doctor: Chronic inflammatory disease is a non-specific term used to characterize long-lasting or frequently recurring bouts of inflammation associated with a more specific disease. Chronic inflammation can be caused by a number of different conditions such as arthritis, lupus, or inflammatory bowel disease like Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis.

Patient: Can a CRP test be performed in my doctor's office?

Doctor: It may be performed in a larger doctor's clinic, but most CRP tests will be performed in a laboratory.

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QUESTIONS:

1. What is CRP test for?
2. Do you think everyone should have this test? Why?
3. Is the test an independent risk factor for cardiovascular diseases?