

Natural Health News

Laboratory Testing for Health and Wellness

Laboratory testing may be necessary in order to identify suspected or hidden causes of health problems. Our clinic works with a number of clinical laboratories to provide a wide range of tests to meet your specific needs and goals. We work with many standard medical tests as well as specialty functional medicine tests. Our doctors work with you to decide if laboratory testing is right for you and what types of tests may be most useful.

Lab testing can serve to either rule out problems or to provide explanations for symptoms. Whether your results are positive or negative, they will help to guide your care. We always correlate lab results with information collected during our extensive intake and any pertinent exams done in the office. All of this helps us to understand your current health, assess your risks, monitor for disease, and target therapeutic approaches.

Conventional Tests

Licensed naturopathic doctors are trained to order and interpret conventional medical tests and include this information in our evaluation of your health problems. Tests include those that you may receive at most doctors' offices, such as:

- ▶ CBC (complete blood count) and differential to assess anemia, infection, or immune system problems
- ▶ Liver function tests
- ▶ Cholesterol tests/lipid panel
- ▶ Thyroid tests
- ▶ Urine cultures
- ▶ PSA tests (prostate specific antigen)
- ▶ Pap smears and vaginal cultures
- ▶ Sexually transmitted disease tests including HIV and hepatitis
- ▶ Hormone screening tests
- ▶ Allergy screening tests
- ▶ Imaging such as X-rays, ultrasound, mammograms and DEXA

Because we have prevention and wellness in mind, we sometimes interpret labs differently than conventional allopathic doctors, so bring in results of labs done elsewhere so that we can include those in your assessment. We also take the time to explain the results to help empower you to understand your body more fully.

Functional Tests

We also offer a variety of non-standard testing to help assess organ system function and more subtle imbalances. These tests may include samples

of saliva, urine, or stool, usually collected in the privacy of your own home. You then send the sample directly to the lab, and the results come here to our clinic so that we can interpret them and review them with you at your next visit. Here are details about a few of the tests that we find very beneficial for many of our patients.

Comprehensive Digestive Stool Analysis (CDSA)

Offers a comprehensive look at the health of the gastrointestinal tract, with information about digestion, absorption, bacterial balance, yeast overgrowth, inflammation, metabolic activity, and immune function. Parasites can be tested as well.

Food Allergy Testing/Hypersensitivity

The incidence of food allergies has increased dramatically over the years, and an estimated 20% of the population may have adverse reactions to foods. Increased total antigenic load related to food and environmental sensitivities has been associated with a wide range of medical conditions affecting virtually every part of the body. An accurate food allergy test can greatly improve the lives of people suffering from undetected allergic reactions.

Heavy Metal Testing

Chronic exposure to toxic heavy metals such as mercury, lead and arsenic has been linked with a variety of chronic health conditions. Analysis of the urine or feces, the main routes of heavy metal excretion from the body, provides important information on the presence of these and other potentially toxic elements and the body's ability to eliminate these successfully.

Adrenal Stress Test

When under stress, the adrenals glands produce cortisol. This test measures cortisol in saliva collected at four different times throughout the day. By evaluating the pattern of cortisol levels, your doctor can tell whether you are in an early adaptive stress response or are in maladapted adrenal fatigue. This information will help to guide your treatments for fatigue or insomnia, as well as give clues to immune function and blood sugar regulation.

Cardiovascular Risk Profile

This is a combination of screening tests that identify important warning markers related to nutrition, blood clotting and inflammation that can play a major role in determining whether an individual is at increased risk of a heart attack. The CRP measures ten important cardiovascular risk factors including total cholesterol, HDL and LDL cholesterol, homocysteine, C-reactive protein, fibrinogen, lipoprotein (a), triglycerides, Apo-B and Apo A-I, and their ratios. This comprehensive testing gives a clearer

picture of cardiovascular disease risk as well as pointing the way to important and effective preventive measures.

Hormone Testing

We use three main methods of hormone monitoring: blood, urine and saliva. Hormones can be measured from a one-day sample or multiple samples throughout the month to assess an entire cycle. Hormones exist in harmony with each other—partners in a delicate balancing act. When our hormones are balanced, our body systems are stable. When hormonal balance is lost, hormone deficiencies and excesses can cause unwanted symptoms and disorders such as fatigue, depression, mood swings, infertility, cycle irregularity in women, migraines, menopause or andropause.

Hormones tested will depend on the case, but may include the sex hormones, the adrenal and thyroid hormones and brain neurotransmitters.

Neurotransmitter Test

This is a urine test which looks at neurotransmitters such as serotonin, GABA, dopamine and epinephrine. These are brain chemicals which affect many aspects of our mental well being. This test helps to pinpoint natural therapies to help with fatigue, insomnia, depression, anxiety and other mood disorders. We can work with patients (along with the prescribing doctor) who are on medications, or who are weaning or trying to avoid taking them.

How do I know if I need lab tests?

If you are a new patient, laboratory testing will be discussed at your initial visit. Otherwise, please feel free to mention this article at your next visit so that we can review your options and decide if any testing would help clarify your case. Many patients are surprised to hear that testing might provide answers for even subtle symptoms that have been difficult to treat in the conventional medical system. Please see our website for more information about the range of tests that we offer.

by Amy Day, ND

SOMA Acupuncture & Natural Health Clinic

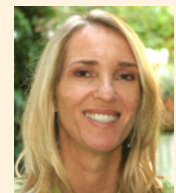


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