

How to Analyze Blood Test Results

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If you're not quite feeling yourself, one of the first things your doctor may order is a series of blood tests. There are literally hundreds of different [types of blood tests](#). They're often grouped into major categories so that clinical labs can test for a number of related diseases at the same time. Here is a simple overview of the major types of blood tests your doctor may order for you.

Difficulty: Moderately Easy

Instructions

things you'll need:

- Prescription from your doctor
- Clinical laboratory

Glucose and Electrolytes

- 1 Look at your glucose levels and compare the results of your blood test to the normal range of 60 to 90 mg/dl.
- 2 Consider taking a "Fasting Glucose Tolerance Test" to determine if you are at risk for diabetes if your glucose levels are over 120 mg/dl.
- 3 Compare your electrolyte values to the normal range on the lab reports. Electrolytes are important in normal heart and cell functioning. The most common electrolyte measurements are for potassium, sodium, chloride and CO₂.

Enzymes

- 1 Look at your lab values for AST, ALT, SGOT, SGPT and GGT. These are important enzymes in your body that are required for the proper functioning of your cells. High values may indicate tissue damage in the heart, liver or other organs.
- 2 Evaluate the results of your alkaline phosphatase. Alkaline phosphatase levels may be high when there is damage to your bones, liver or if you have gallstones.
- 3 Compare your CPK levels with the normal range. High CPK levels often diagnose diseases of the heart and muscles and are often seen with heart attacks.

Blood Fats

- 1 Contrast your total cholesterol levels with the recommended range from your laboratory report. High total cholesterol represents an elevated risk for heart disease and stroke.
- 2 Look at the specific measurements for LDL cholesterol and HDL cholesterol. The LDL and HDL levels represent your relative risk for heart disease and are often analyzed together. The LDL is the "bad" cholesterol and should be less than 100 mg. The HDL is the "good" cholesterol and should be higher than 35. More important than any individual number is the ratio between the good and bad cholesterol.

- 3 Compare your triglyceride values with those of a normal range. Triglycerides represent high levels of blood fat and is another indicator of heart disease.

Cardiac Risk Factors

- 1 Focus on your "C Reactive Protein" level results. High levels of CRP represent inflammation and can be indicators of cardiovascular disease, heart attack or stroke.
- 2 Compare your homocysteine levels against normal laboratory ranges. Like CRP, high levels of homocysteine can be present with heart disease, other cardiovascular diseases and deficiencies in folic acid and vitamin B12.
- 3 Look at your lipoprotein A level and compare it to the normal levels. Elevated values for Lpa often indicate premature risks for coronary heart disease.

Hormones

- 1 Look at your insulin values and compare them with the normal range for adults your age. Insulin is secreted by the pancreas and plays a major role in glucose metabolism. Individuals with low insulin levels may be predisposed to type 1 diabetes.
- 2 Compare your C-peptide levels with the recommended range from your lab results. Abnormal values are often associated with pancreatic diseases and type 1 diabetes.
- 3 Evaluate your estradiol results against normal ranges. Estradiol levels are a type of estrogen and are important in monitoring menopause and when taking hormone replacement therapy and birth control pills.

Tips & Warnings

- Have your blood drawn and analyzed by a licensed clinical lab. Ask your doctor to explain the results. Keep copies of your lab results and compare them to others.
- Avoid jumping to immediate conclusions based on the results. If in doubt, have another test ordered or get a second opinion.