

Amylase (Blood)



Does this test have other names?

Serum amylase

What is this test?

This test measures the level of the enzyme amylase in your blood. Amylase helps digest carbohydrates in your food.

About 40% of the amylase in your body is made by your pancreas. The rest comes from your salivary glands. This test is used to find out if you have a condition that affects your pancreas or salivary glands. If you have a problem with your pancreas, your amylase levels are usually higher than normal. High levels can also be caused by an infection, cancer, or even alcohol or certain medicines.

Why do I need this test?

You might need this test to help your healthcare provider diagnose or manage a health problem. These problems include:

- Acute, chronic, or alcoholic pancreatitis
- Ruptured ectopic pregnancy
- Digestive conditions such as perforated peptic ulcers, appendicitis, salivary gland infections, or tumors

The test may also be done in an emergency.

What other tests might I have along with this test?

Your healthcare provider may also order these tests:

- Lipase
- Trypsinogen
- Hematocrit
- Liver function tests
- Abdominal CT

What do my test results mean?

Test results may vary depending on your age, gender, health history, and other things. Your test results may be different depending on the lab used. They may not mean you have a problem. Ask your healthcare provider what your test results mean for you.

The normal range for amylase in a blood sample for an adult is 30 to 110 units per liter (U/L).

If your amylase levels are higher than normal, you may have 1 of many conditions. These include:

- Sudden swelling of the pancreas (acute pancreatitis)

- Chronic pancreatitis that suddenly gets worse
- Cancers of the pancreas, breast, colon, ovary, or lung
- A sore in the pancreas
- A type of cyst in the pancreas (pancreatic pseudocysts)
- Swelling in your abdomen (ascites)
- Macroamylasemia. This is a noncancer (benign) condition marked by having a substance called macroamylase in your blood.
- Peptic ulcer that has a hole in it (perforated ulcer)
- Death of tissue in your intestine (intestinal infarction)
- Blockage in your intestines
- Appendicitis
- Sudden swelling of the gallbladder (acute cholecystitis)
- Ruptured ectopic pregnancy
- Salivary gland swelling
- Swelling of the lining of your abdomen (peritonitis)
- Burns
- Diabetic ketoacidosis
- Kidney problems
- Use of certain medicines such as morphine
- Alcohol use
- Mumps
- Tumors in the prostate
- Eating disorders such as bulimia or anorexia nervosa
- Inflammatory bowel disease
- Higher levels of triglycerides (hypertriglyceridemia)

Your levels may also be higher after a pancreatic procedure such as a cholangiopancreatography. They may also be higher after surgery or trauma.

Your amylase levels may be lower with these conditions:

- Chronic pancreatitis
- Liver failure
- Cystic fibrosis

How is this test done?

The test requires a blood sample, which is drawn through a needle from a vein in your arm.

Does this test pose any risks?

Taking a blood sample with a needle carries risks that include bleeding, infection, bruising, or feeling dizzy. When the needle pricks your arm, you may feel a slight stinging sensation or pain. Afterward, the site may be slightly sore.

What might affect my test results?

Certain medicines such as aspirin, medicines that contain estrogen, and pain relievers like morphine may affect your test results. Alcohol use can also affect your results. So, too, can being pregnant. Or having had a recent kidney transplant.

How do I get ready for this test?

You don't need to prepare for this test. But be sure your healthcare provider knows about all the medicines, herbs, vitamins, and supplements you are taking. This includes medicines that don't need a prescription and any illegal drugs you may use.

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