

T and B Lymphocyte and Natural Killer Cell Profile



Does this test have other names?

Lymphocyte profile, lymphocyte subset panel

What is this test?

This test finds and counts 3 types of white blood cells in your blood.

Your body makes several types of white blood cells. White blood cells fight off disease and illness. Lymphocytes are a type of white blood cell. They help your immune system by making antibodies and other substances that battle cancer and infections. They also kill cells that are infected or that are foreign to your body.

This test looks at 3 types of lymphocytes to see how well your immune system is working:

- **B lymphocytes (B cells).** These make antibodies that help your body fight infections.
- **T lymphocytes (T cells).** These attack foreign cells, cancer cells, and cells infected with a virus. T cells start growing in bone marrow and then travel to the thymus gland to mature.
- **Natural killer cells (NK cells).** These contain substances that can kill tumor cells or cells infected with a virus.

Why do I need this test?

You may need this test if you have an illness like HIV/AIDS that could cause problems with your immune system. You may also need this test if you have certain types of cancer or are being treated with chemotherapy.

What other tests might I have along with this test?

You may also have other tests to check how well your immune system is working. One of these tests measures the amounts of different kinds of immunoglobulins, or antibodies, in your blood. You may also need diagnostic scans, urine tests, a bone marrow biopsy, and other blood tests.

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.

Having low or high numbers of B cells, T cells, or NK cells may mean you have an illness or disease. Other tests will help in finding what type of illness or disease.

How is this test done?

The test is done with a blood sample. A needle is used to draw blood from a vein in your arm or hand.

Does this test pose any risks?

Having a blood test with a needle carries some risks. These include bleeding, infection, bruising, and feeling lightheaded. When the needle pricks your arm or hand, you may feel a slight sting or pain. Afterward, the site may be sore.

What might affect my test results?

Your results may not be accurate if you have been sick recently or have a fever.

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 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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