

## Interpreting Blood Test Results

The numbers can be mystifying to most people, what does it all mean? You go in once a year for a physical and your health care provider want to draw a little blood too. The results come in and you're frantically trying to write them down, unsure of what they mean or what questions to ask. On the other hand, your doctor may tell you everything's okay, that you have a couple of numbers on the high side, something to watch for, but doesn't really give you any numbers. Part of taking charge of your health includes becoming knowledgeable about your body and how all the systems work. Interpreting blood test results is part of that, which is why it's important to ask questions when speaking to your health care provider about the results, and don't leave without getting the answers you want.

Some common blood tests are CBC (complete blood count), CMP (complete metabolic panel), TSH (thyroid stimulating hormone), liver enzymes, and electrolyte panel, and others as deemed necessary for specific conditions. Samples taken to measure the amount of cholesterol in the blood use a small sample taken from a finger prick, or from a vein in your arm. The blood is tested for total cholesterol level, HDL or good cholesterol, LDL or bad cholesterol, and triglycerides, which represent your risk for heart disease and helps to guide a course for treatment if necessary. Other chronic health conditions, like diabetes, require testing of the blood multiple times throughout the day to make sure glucose levels remain in the appropriate range. Interpreting blood test results in this case is a detrimental part of managing the diabetes, which is why diabetic education is crucial to patients and their families.

Review information about blood tests and learn how to interpret blood test results, so that when your doctor calls you know what he or she is talking about! Of course, interpreting blood test results should ultimately be left to the medical professional because knowledge of underlying disease process is critical to accurate diagnosis and prognosis. Blood tests can have false positive or negative results, and sometimes need to be repeated to confirm or negate the first test. Record and track your results in a small journal or computer spreadsheet so that you can note any variations if they occur. You should always go over any questions or concerns you may have with your health care provider and stay on top of what you body's up to!