

Understanding your pet's blood work

Blood tests help us determine causes of illness accurately, safely, and quickly and let us monitor the progress of medical treatments. A checkmark in any box indicates a significant abnormal finding on your pet's blood work. If you have questions, ask any staff member. We want you to understand our recommendations and be a partner in your pet's care.

Complete blood count (CBC)

The most common blood test, a CBC gives information on hydration status, anemia, infection, the blood's clotting ability, and the immune system's ability to respond. This test is essential for pets with fevers, vomiting, diarrhea, weakness, pale gums, or loss of appetite. If your pet needs surgery, a CBC can detect unseen abnormalities.

- HCT (hematocrit) measures the percentage of red blood cells to detect anemia and dehydration.
- Hb and MCHC (hemoglobin and mean corpuscular hemoglobin concentration) hemoglobin is the oxygen-carrying pigment of red blood cells (corpuscles).
- WBC (white blood cell count) measures the body's immune cells. Increases or decreases indicate certain diseases or infections.
- GRANS and L/M (granulocytes and lymphocytes/monocytes) are specific types of white blood cells.
- EOS (eosinophils) are a specific type of white blood cells that may indicate allergic or parasitic conditions.
- PLT (platelet count) measures cells that form blood clots.
- RETICS (reticulocytes) are immature red blood cells. High levels indicate regenerative anemia.

Blood serum chemistries

These common tests evaluate organ function, electrolyte status, hormone levels, and more. They are important in evaluating the health of older pets, pets with vomiting and diarrhea or toxin exposure, pets receiving long-term medications, and preanesthetic patients.

- ALB (albumin) is a serum protein that helps evaluate hydration, hemorrhage, and intestinal, liver, and kidney disease.
- ALKP (alkaline phosphatase) elevations may indicate liver damage, Cushing's disease, and active bone growth in young pets. This test is especially significant in cats.
- ALT (alanine aminotransferase) is a sensitive indicator of active liver damage but doesn't indicate the cause.
- AMYL (amylase) elevations show pancreatitis or kidney disease.
- AST (aspartate aminotransferase) increases may indicate liver, heart, or skeletal muscle damage.
- BUN (blood urea nitrogen) indicates kidney function. An increased blood level is called azotemia and can be caused by kidney, liver, and heart disease, urethral obstruction, shock, and dehydration.
- Ca (calcium) deviations can indicate a variety of diseases. Tumors, hyperparathyroidism, kidney disease, and low albumin are just a few of the conditions that alter serum calcium.
- CHOL (cholesterol) is used to supplement diagnosis of hypothyroidism, liver disease, Cushing's disease, and diabetes mellitus.
- Cl (chloride) is an electrolyte often lost with vomiting and Addison's disease. Elevations often indicate dehydration.
- Cortisol is a hormone that is measured in tests for Cushing's disease (the low-dose dexamethasone suppression test) and Addison's disease (ACTH stimulation test).
- CREA (creatinine) reveals kidney function. This test helps distinguish between kidney and nonkidney causes of elevated BUN.
- GGT (gamma glutamyl transferase) is an enzyme that indicates liver disease or corticosteroid excess.
- GLOB (globulin) is a blood protein that often increases with chronic inflammation and certain disease states.
- GLU (glucose) is a blood sugar. Elevated levels may indicate diabetes mellitus. Low levels can cause collapse, seizures, or coma.
- K (potassium) is an electrolyte lost with vomiting, diarrhea, or excessive urination. Increased levels may indicate kidney failure, Addison's disease, dehydration, and urethral obstruction. High levels can lead to cardiac arrest.
- LIP (lipase) is an enzyme that may indicate pancreatitis.
- Na (sodium) is an electrolyte lost with vomiting, diarrhea, and kidney or Addison's diseases. This test helps indicate hydration status.
- PHOS (phosphorus) elevations are often associated with kidney disease, hyperthyroidism, and bleeding disorders.
- TBIL (total bilirubin) elevations may indicate liver or hemolytic disease. This test helps identify bile duct problems and certain types of anemia.
- TP (total protein) indicates hydration status and provides information about the liver, kidneys, and infectious diseases.
- T4 (thyroxine) is a thyroid hormone. Decreased levels often signal hypothyroidism in dogs, while high levels indicate hyperthyroidism in cats.