

Complete Blood Count

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Your health care provider ordered a common lab test called a complete blood count. This test is also known as a CBC.

Blood is drawn from your arm and tested to measure the main parts of your blood.

The test results help your health care provider tell if you have anemia (low iron), an infection, or other diseases.

What the Blood Test Measures

The CBC measures seven parts of your blood. They are:

- **white blood cell count (WBC):**
White blood cells help your body fight an infection. The test measures the number of and the different types of white blood cells in your blood.
- **white blood cell differential (DIFF):**
White blood cell differential is a percentage of the different types of white blood cells that make up the white blood cell count. These include neutrophils, eosinophils, basophils, lymphocytes and monocytes.

Together, the WBC and DIFF can help your health care provider tell if an infection is caused by a virus or bacteria.

The percent of the different types of white blood cells may vary outside the normal range. With a normal WBC, an abnormal differential is often considered a normal variation. This is normally not a cause of worry.

- **red blood cell count (RBC):**
Red blood cells carry oxygen to all of your tissues. They also help remove waste products from your tissues. The test measures the number of red blood cells in your blood.
- **hemoglobin (Hgb):**
Hemoglobin is the most important part of a red blood cell. The protein carries oxygen from your lungs to your tissues. Hemoglobin also takes carbon dioxide from the tissues to the lungs. You breathe out the carbon dioxide when you exhale.

The test measures the amount of hemoglobin in your blood.
- **hematocrit (Hct):**
Hematocrit is the percentage of red blood cells in your total blood. The test measures how much space the red blood cells take in your blood.
- **platelet count:**
Platelets help prevent bleeding by causing the blood to clot. The test measures the number of platelets in your blood.

- **red blood cell indices (MCV, MCH, MCHC, RDW):**
Red blood cell indices are measures of different characteristics of red blood cells, hemoglobin and hematocrit. These measures can help your health care provider tell if you have anemia.

(Anemia is a condition in which your body doesn't make enough red blood cells or enough hemoglobin. As a result, blood does not carry enough oxygen to the rest of your body.)

Test Results

You will receive your lab results either in the mail or in MyChart. The results will tell you what your numbers are and if they are inside or outside of the normal range.

Results that are slightly outside of the normal range may still be OK for you.

Your primary care provider will talk with you if more tests or treatment are needed.