



Common Lab Tests

As part of a regular checkup, to get a diagnosis, or perhaps to provide a benchmark, one or more laboratory tests may be requested by doctors. Here is a list of the most common tests ordered and their purposes. These tests are done using blood samples, except where noted. For more detail, please check www.labtestonline.org.

Amylase - If the patient has symptoms of a pancreatic disorder, such as severe abdominal pain, fever, loss of appetite, or nausea, this test may be ordered.

ANA - This test helps to diagnose lupus and to rule out certain other autoimmune diseases.

aPTT (PTT) - Most often ordered to help evaluate the patient's risk of excessive bleeding prior to a surgical procedure, or to monitor heparin anticoagulant therapy.

A1C (Hemoglobin A1C or Glycohemoglobin) - Used to monitor a person's diabetes and to aid in treatment decisions, this test is usually performed with the first diagnosis and then 2 to 4 times per year.

BMP (Basic Metabolic Panel) - A group of 7-8 tests used as a screening tool to check for conditions like diabetes and kidney disease. The patient may be asked to fast for 10 to 12 hours prior to test.

CBC (Complete Blood Count) - Determines general health and screens for disorders such as anemia or infections, as well as nutritional status and toxic substance exposure.

CMP (Comprehensive Metabolic Panel) - This group of 14 tests gives the doctor information about the kidneys, liver, and electrolyte & acid/base balance, as well as about blood sugar and blood proteins.

Electrolytes (Electrolyte Panel) - This test can be requested as part of a routine exam, and when the doctor suspects an excess or deficit of electrolytes (sodium or potassium) or an acid-base imbalance.

ESR (Sedimentation Rate) - The doctor may order this test to determine the cause of inflammation, or to help diagnose and follow the course of joint or muscle pain.

Flu Tests - Used to determine whether flu-like symptoms are due to influenza A or B, or to other causes. Testing may be done using a nasopharyngeal swab, nasal aspirate or wash, or a throat swab.

Glucose - Used to identify blood glucose level, and to screen for, diagnose, and monitor diabetes, pre-diabetes, and hypoglycemia. If the patient is diabetic, glucose levels should be monitored up to several times a day.

HCG - Typically performed to confirm and monitor pregnancy, or if symptoms suggest



issues of concern. Urine sample is collected in the morning or a blood sample is drawn.

HIV Antibody - This test determines if the patient is infected with HIV and should be performed three to six months after the patient thinks he/she may have been exposed to the virus.

Lipid Profile - This group of tests can determine risk of coronary heart disease, and may be a good indicator of whether someone is likely to have a heart attack or stroke, as caused by blockage of blood vessels.

Liver Panel (Liver Function Panel) - Also known as liver (hepatic) function tests or LFT, can detect liver damage or disease. Multiple tests may be ordered at the same time, and may be used to detect hepatitis, or diagnose other liver-related conditions.

Lyme Disease - If the patient shows symptoms of Lyme disease, this test may be ordered to see if the patient has been exposed to the bacterium that causes Lyme disease.

Microalbumin - Performed annually after a diagnosis of diabetes or hypertension to screen for a possible kidney disorder. It can be done using a random, timed, overnight, or 24-hour urine sample.

Mono - If the patient has symptoms of mononucleosis, including fever, sore throat, swollen glands, and fatigue, the doctor may order this test to make a diagnosis.

Pap Smear - Should be performed annually for women who are over the age of 18 and/or sexually active, to screen for cervical cancer and certain vaginal or uterine infections. Cells are removed from the cervical area for testing.

PSA (Prostate Specific Antigen) - This test is to screen for — and monitor — prostate cancer.

PT (Protime) - Used to check how well prescribed blood-thinning medications (anti-coagulants) are working, or to help detect and diagnose a bleeding disorder.

Stool Culture - Used to determine whether the patient has pathogenic bacteria in the gastrointestinal tract. Test requires a fresh stool sample or one that has been placed in a specialized collection container.

TSH (Thyroid Stimulating Hormone) - This test is performed to screen for and diagnose thyroid disorders, or to monitor treatment of hypothyroidism.

T4 (Thyroxine) - Usually ordered after an abnormal TSH result, this test can diagnose hypothyroidism or hyperthyroidism in adults; or screen for hypothyroidism in newborns.

Uric Acid - Used to detect high levels of uric acid, or to monitor certain chemotherapy or radiation cancer therapies.

Urinalysis - This standard test is usually performed on admission to a hospital or as part of an annual physical. It may also be done if you have symptoms relating to abdominal pain or blood in the urine. One to two ounces of urine are required.

Urine Culture - If you experience symptoms of a urinary tract infection (UTI), your doctor may require a sample of your urine to test and make the diagnosis.

