

Complete Blood Count (CBC)

One of the most common lab tests you will have during your medical care is called a complete blood count, or CBC. This test measures the number of different cells in a small amount of blood. Your care team will watch closely for these results:

- White blood cell (WBC) count
- Absolute neutrophil count (ANC)
- Hemoglobin (HGB) count
- Platelet count

White blood cell (WBC) count

White blood cells help protect your body from infection. A normal white blood cell count varies from 3.5 to 10 k/ μ L.

A white blood cell count of less than 1 k/ μ L may make you more likely to get an infection. A high white blood cell count may be a sign that your body is already fighting infection.

Contact your care team if you have a low white blood cell count and develop a fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher.

Absolute neutrophil count (ANC)

Neutrophils are the most common type of white blood cells and are the first to respond to bacteria and viruses. The amount of these cells in your blood sample is listed on the lab report as the neutrophil # or absolute neutrophil count (ANC).

A normal neutrophil count is between 1.3 and 7 k/ μ L. Your neutrophil level may drop very low during your treatment. It comes back up as you recover.

Your risk of infection is higher if your neutrophil count is less than 0.5 k/ μ L. Let your care team know right away if you have a low neutrophil count and develop a fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher.

Hemoglobin (HGB) count

Hemoglobin in your red blood cells carries oxygen to other cells in your body. A normal hemoglobin count is between 12 and 16 g/dL. A low hemoglobin level is called anemia. When you have anemia, you can tire easily and may feel dizzy or weak.

If your hemoglobin drops too low you may need a blood transfusion. Talk to your care team if you start to feel dizzy, weak, or too tired to do your normal daily tasks.

Platelet count

Platelets are fragments of blood cells that help stop bleeding by forming a clot over an injury. A normal platelet count is between 150 and 450 k/ μ L.

If your platelet counts are too low, you can bleed or bruise easily. Take extra care with sharp objects and try to avoid activities where you could get hurt. Let your care team know if you have any bleeding or bruising.

Questions?

Talk with your care team for more information about your blood test results and what they mean.