

UNDERSTANDING COMMON LAB TESTS FOR INFLAMMATORY BOWEL DISEASE

It is important for a person with inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) to have routine blood tests. The results can tell the doctor just how sick you are, if your disease is active and/or how your medication is working. "Normal" ranges are different for different ages so check to see what is normal for you. Here are some of the tests your doctors will use to see how you are doing.



CBC (Complete Blood Count)

This test counts all the different types of blood cells (red, white and platelets), as well as hemoglobin levels. White blood cells usually fight infection but some take part in causing IBD. There may be more white blood cells working when the bowel is inflamed. Platelets are small parts of cells that make blood clot. There may also be more of these when the bowel is inflamed. Hemoglobin carries oxygen in the blood; it may be low in IBD because of difficulty in taking up the iron from the inflamed bowel or bleeding from it.

ESR (Erythrocyte Sedimentation Rate)

This test shows how quickly red blood cells settle down when blood is left undisturbed. The rate may go up when the bowel is inflamed.



Total Protein and Albumin

Protein is a very important part of your body and comes from the diet. With IBD, the body gets less protein because it is hard to eat well and may be lost with diarrhea. The doctor uses this test to see how much total protein and how much albumin, a type of protein, there is.

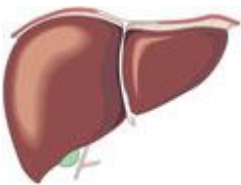
CRP (C-Reactive Protein)

CRP is a special type of protein made by the liver only when there is inflammation somewhere in the body. The doctor may use this test to see if your IBD is acting up or to see how your medicine is working.

Fecal calprotectin

Calprotectin is a protein released by a type of white blood cell called a neutrophil. When there is inflammation in the gastrointestinal (GI) tract, neutrophils move to the area and release calprotectin, resulting in an increased level in the stool.

All these tests tell your doctor how much your bowel is inflamed.



Liver Tests

Some liver enzymes (special proteins - ALT, AST, GGT, and Alk Phos) increase in the blood of IBD patients. This happens if cells of the liver get upset - sometimes it is the medicine you are taking that makes this happen and; sometimes it is because your inflamed bowel can affect other parts of your body.

Lipase and Amylase

These are found in your pancreas. IBD can cause your pancreas to be inflamed. This is called pancreatitis. Also some of the medicine you are taking can cause pancreatitis.

