



Understanding Your Test Results

Your GP record is written to help medical staff look after you. This means that sometimes you may not understand everything you see. We have shared this information to help you understand your test results, but if you have any further questions please speak to a member of our team.

It is important to learn what's 'normal for you', this is particularly important if you have a long-term illness, as your results may be different to other people's.

Significant things to consider about your results:

- A test result outside the range may not indicate a problem, these are just reference ranges.
- Equally, if all results are within the reference range, this does not completely guarantee there isn't a concern.
- Not all results are returned to us at the same time, we may be waiting for further results before contacting you.
- Comments may have been added automatically by a laboratory computer or by a laboratory scientist or doctor. Generally, comments are written for the doctor requesting the test rather than the patient, and so they may not be very meaningful to you.
- It is important to follow the advice of your doctor or other healthcare professional. Always look out for our comments attached to results. Often these have critical information about the test and how to interpret the result. We have included below an explanation of some of the comments you may commonly see on your results.

FAQs

Where are the reference ranges (normal ranges) for tests?

The reference ranges for your tests can be found on your laboratory report. They are typically found to the right of your results. These are standardised reference ranges, but they will not apply to everyone. They do not take into account things like your gender, age, ethnicity or health conditions. The reference ranges mean a computer may flag a result as out of range or abnormal, but for you this might be a normal result. Whilst the ranges are helpful, it is important to follow the advice of the doctor who interprets the result.

What does it mean if my result is outside the reference range?

Your test results are interpreted by your health care provider within the context of other tests that you have completed. These results are also measured against other factors like your medical history. The medical significance of a single result that is slightly high or slightly low may be difficult to determine. This is why a doctor may repeat a test, and why they may look at results from your previous tests. However, a result outside the reference range may indicate a problem and warrant further investigation. Your doctor will evaluate your test results in the context of other relevant factors, and determine whether a result that falls outside of the reference range presents a significant issue.

If my results are normal, does that mean I have nothing to worry about?

If your results are within normal limits, it's certainly a good sign. But one set of tests offers a snapshot of certain aspects of your health rather than a guarantee. There is a lot of overlap among results from healthy people and those with diseases, so there is still a chance that there could be an undetected problem. If you're trying to follow a healthy lifestyle, take test results that are within range as a good sign, and keep it up. However, normal results do not mean that unhealthy habits will not have consequences in the future. Your health care provider may want to monitor you with a series of tests to make sure you're still on track and to document any trends. A rise or drop in results, even if they are still within normal limits, could provide meaningful information.

If my result is abnormal, does that mean I have a problem with my health?

Not necessarily. A test result outside the reference range signals to your doctor to further investigate your condition, but it may or may not indicate a specific problem. You can have a value outside the range and have nothing. It is possible that your result is within that 5% of healthy people who fall outside the statistical reference range. In addition, there are many things that could throw off a test without indicating a major problem, such as not preparing for the test properly. Your doctor may want to rerun the test. Some abnormal results may resolve on their own, especially if they are on the border of the reference range. Your doctor will also seek explanations for an abnormal result. Key points your doctor will consider include how far outside of the reference range the results are and whether repeated tests also produce abnormal results.

I have had a blood test or dropped a sample at the practice, but what happens now?

Blood tests and other samples have to be sent away to a hospital laboratory for analysis. An NHS courier collects samples from us each day in the morning and early afternoon.

- If your result needs urgent action we will contact you by phone to discuss what action needs to be taken.
- If your result needs action, but not urgently, we will contact you within an appropriate timescale to explain what action needs to be taken.
- If your result is normal, or if the doctor has some information for you following your test we may send this by text message.
- We aim to inform you of all results, but due to the volume we receive, if no action is required the practice will not contact you but you are free to check your results on the NHS App or contact the practice to get your result.
- If you need to discuss your result with a doctor or nurse, please ask the receptionist to take a message for the doctor or nurse. They will either telephone you or you will be asked to make an appointment to see them.

Why does the result take so long?

The person who asked you to have your test or the person who took your test will tell you approximately how long it will be for your test to be analysed. Most tests are analysed within 1 week, however, there are certain tests which require several weeks to be analysed. If you have a urine test, it may take several days to grow the bacteria and see which antibiotic will work.

What does the doctors' comment mean?

Ask patient to book appointment

The doctor would like to speak to you to explain the result(s). The doctor may ask for this to be in person or by telephone. They may recommend you see another member of the team to discuss your result.

Ask patient to repeat test

Small fluctuations in test results are common and slightly abnormal results usually return to normal without the need for treatment. The GP would like to check your result has returned to normal or remained stable. We will tell you how long you should wait before rechecking your blood test.

Discussed with patient or Patient informed

The doctor has already discussed this result with you.

Seen and dealt with

The doctor has already seen you and has dealt with any issues that arose.

Has appointment to discuss

You already have an appointment booked with the doctor, during which they will discuss the results with you. There is no need to contact us before then as the result is not urgent.

Just out of range-OK

This means that the doctor has looked at the result and deemed it to be just outside of the normal range and the result is not concerning and is OK for you.

Normal- no action

This means that the doctor has looked at the result and deemed it to be within the normal range and no further investigation or treatment is needed.

Satisfactory

This means that the doctor has looked at the result and deemed it to be just outside of the normal range and the result is not concerning. No further investigation or treatment is needed.

Stable

The doctor has looked at the result and deemed them stable and the result is not concerning. We will continue to monitor, and the doctor will tell you if you need a repeat test in the future.

On correct treatment

The doctor started you on a medicine and the results of your test show this is the correct treatment. There is no reason to change current treatment according to test results.

Inadequate specimen

Unfortunately very occasionally samples are lost or damaged. Sometimes there is a delay in samples reaching the laboratory which can affect the quality of the specimen making it unusable. On other occasions an incorrect bottle or label may have been used. Occasionally an incorrect test is requested in which case a repeat may not be needed. The doctor will usually ask you to repeat the test.

Referred to practice pharmacist

Our practice pharmacist will contact you to discuss the result. This is usually because your result has indicated we should make changes to your medications or start a new medicine.

Links to Patient Guides

Sites to help you understand specific test results:

- [Lab tests online](#)
- [Ada: Blood tests explained](#)