



Kidney Q&A

4-12 months

Life Options Rehabilitation Program
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Q: What is *my* role in my monthly blood test results?

A: Your doctor will order certain lab tests every month to see how you are responding to treatment. These tests help to link your eating and treatments to how you feel. The key role for you is to learn what each of your tests is for and what the results mean for *you*—one test at a time.

The more you know about your lab tests, the more in control you'll feel:

- Knowing what's going on inside your body helps you see how well you're taking care of yourself.
- Knowing if a lab result is too high or too low lets you make changes to get the results back in line.
- Taking better care of yourself will help you feel better and more hopeful about your future.

Talk to your dietitian. In most dialysis centers, your dietitian will give you your blood test results. He or she can explain how your lab tests relate to your food and fluid choices, and your treatments. Ask about tests you don't understand. Keep a notebook of your test results so you can see changes.

Follow instructions to prepare for special tests. Most of the tests you have will be drawn at your regular dialysis visits. But sometimes you will need other tests that

you need to prepare for. Make sure you understand what you need to do or avoid to be sure the test is accurate. Tell the lab person about herbs, alcohol, or drugs you're taking. If you are told to fast, don't eat or drink anything after midnight. If you forget, reschedule the test.

What *I* can do to learn more about my blood tests:

- Ask my doctor or dietitian what my tests measure, what the results mean for how I feel, and what I can do to keep my tests in the target range.
- Ask my doctor what changes he or she will prescribe, based on my results.
- Keep a notebook of my lab test results so I can look for patterns over time.
- Ask what I need to do (or avoid) to prepare for any lab test.
- Make sure my doctor knows my smoking and drinking habits and all medicines and herbs I take, since sometimes these can affect my results.
- Visit module 4 of Kidney School™: *Following Your Treatment Plan* at www.kidneyschool.org to learn more about taking drugs correctly.
- Visit module 7 of Kidney School™: *Understanding Kidney Lab Tests* to learn more about reading blood test results.