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What does blood gas test for

A blood gas test is also called an arterial blood gas test or a blood gas analysis. It measures oxygen and carbon dioxide levels in the blood. The test can also show blood pH levels and lung function. Doctors often use blood gas tests in emergency situations to help diagnose the cause of breathing difficulty. In this article, learn more about the purpose of a blood gas test and how to interpret the results. Share on PinterestA blood gas test can help to diagnose lung problems. Anyone who is struggling to breathe or who has a lung-related health issue will undergo a blood gas test. The results can help a doctor to identify the cause of symptoms. A blood gas test can show how well the lungs, heart, and kidneys are working. More specifically, results of the test can help a doctor to diagnose lung and breathing problems, check whether treatments for lung conditions are working, determine whether a person has a ruptured blood vessel, metabolic disease, or chemical poisoning. Doctors also use the test to check the acid-base balances in people who have kidney problems, have diabetes, are recovering from drug overdoses. A doctor usually performs the test in a hospital, and often in an emergency room, but some doctors can perform the blood gas test in clinics. A doctor may start with a modified Allen test to determine how well blood is flowing to the hand. This involves applying pressure to the arteries in the wrist to obstruct the blood flow for no more than 15 seconds, causing the hand to change color. The doctor will release the pressure, and if regular coloring returns to the hand within 5–15 seconds, the results are normal, and the blood gas test can begin. If the color does not return in this period, it is not safe to continue with testing. During the blood gas test, a doctor will use a small needle to draw blood from an artery in the wrist. If a person is receiving oxygen therapy, they will need to stop using it for at least 20–30 minutes before the blood gas test, if possible. Drawing blood from an artery can cause more pain than drawing blood from a vein because the arteries contain sensitive nerves and are located deeper within the body. Any pain or discomfort last for a few minutes after the test. Some people may feel nauseous or dizzy while the doctor draws blood, especially if they are nervous. To reduce bruising, a person can gently press on the area for a few minutes, once the doctor removes the needle. Rarely, it is possible for the needle to cause damage or block the artery. Anyone who has undergone a blood gas test should avoid heavy lifting for at least 1 day to prevent complications or injury. A doctor will not use a blood gas test alone to make a diagnosis. They usually need other tests, including urine tests to check the functioning of the kidneys, a chest X-ray or other imaging to examine the lungs, tests that measure lung volume. The doctor will also request further blood work to determine a person's blood counts and to check the levels of sodium, potassium, bicarbonate, blood glucose, commonly known as blood sugar. Abnormal results of a blood gas test can indicate that health conditions or injuries are affecting a person's breathing. When making a diagnosis, a doctor will consider results of this test and others and a person's overall health. The results of a blood gas test can show whether the lungs are getting enough oxygen, the lungs are releasing enough carbon dioxide, the kidneys are working properly. The following are normal ranges for results of a blood gas test: pH: 7.35–7.45, partial pressure of oxygen (PaO₂): 80–100 millimeters of mercury (mmHg), partial pressure of carbon dioxide: 35–45 mmHg, bicarbonate: 22–26 milliequivalents per liter, oxygen saturation: 95 percent. Age, health history, and sex can influence these measurements. Results that fall outside the normal ranges do not always indicate a heart, lung, or kidney problem. A doctor is in the best position to explain to each person what their results mean. pH and PaO₂ The two most important measurements are pH, also called the acid-base balance, and PaO₂. If a person's pH is out of balance, it could mean that their lungs are not functioning well or that their kidneys are struggling to remove waste. If pH results fall outside of normal ranges, the doctor will perform further tests to determine the reason. The PaO₂ measurement shows the oxygen pressure in the blood. Most healthy adults have a PaO₂ within the normal range of 80–100 mmHg. If a PaO₂ level is lower than 80 mmHg, it means that a person is not getting enough oxygen. A low PaO₂ level can point to an underlying health condition, such as emphysema, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or COPD, pulmonary fibrosis, a problem with the heart. A doctor usually performs a blood gas test in a hospital, when a person has a severe illness or injury. The doctor will draw blood from an artery in the wrist to check how well the lungs and kidneys are functioning. Results of a blood gas test can help to determine the cause of breathing problems. However, a doctor will also consider results of other tests before making a diagnosis. David Silverman/Getty Images Blood tests are a normal part of your healthcare and help your doctor assess your overall health. When you receive a copy of your blood test results, you might be confused by all the numbers and abbreviations. Learn more about the common tests performed to help you understand your results. Complete Blood Count One of the most common blood tests performed is the complete blood count (CBC), which measures the white blood cells, red blood cells and platelets in the blood. The numbers tell your doctor if your body is producing the proper number of each cell, and they can identify if you've had a recent infection, clotting issues or underlying conditions. For example, a high white blood cell count indicates the presence of an infection, notes Ada Health. Hematocrit (Hct) and hemoglobin (Hgb) tests both look at red blood cells and are useful in diagnosing anemia or other deficiencies. Lipid Panel A lipid panel measures the fat in your blood to assess cardiac risk. A lipid panel consists of your total cholesterol, HDL (good) cholesterol, LDL (bad) cholesterol and triglycerides. Too much of the bad cholesterol in your blood puts you at risk for hardened arteries, heart disease and stroke. However, the good cholesterol can help undo some of the damage from the bad cholesterol, which is why your lipid panel also includes a ratio of each type in relation to one another, according to Ada Health. Your lab test results online often display your range as well as the ideal or target range for each value for comparison. If you're wondering what blood tests require fasting, this is one of them. Blood Chemistry Also known as a chemistry panel or chem 7, this test actually includes seven tests that measure different enzymes in the blood as well as evaluate your kidney function. A blood chemistry test also measures your blood glucose level, so your doctor can use this test to determine if you need further testing for diabetes, notes Verywell Health. Liver Enzymes There are many blood lab test abbreviations associated with measuring your liver enzymes. The test itself is referred to as liver function studies (LFTs). Because your liver plays a big role in blood clotting and removing toxins from your bloodstream, it's important to test its function. Elevated liver enzymes indicate that your liver isn't functioning as it should, according to Verywell Health. The GGT is another test that can help your doctor assess if you have liver damage. Hemoglobin A1c Hemoglobin A1c (HbA1c) is a test that measures your average blood sugar over a period of two or three months. Your doctor usually orders this test if he or she suspects that you are at risk for diabetes. If you've been diagnosed with diabetes, this test becomes a part of your normal healthcare routine and is performed every three months. WebMD notes that a normal A1c is below 5.7 percent, and those with diabetes have an A1c higher than 6.5 percent. MORE FROM SYMPTOMFIND.COM Medically Reviewed by Sabrina Felson, MD on September 09, 2021 An arterial blood gas (ABG) test measures oxygen and carbon dioxide levels in your blood. It also measures your body's acid-base (pH) level, which is usually in balance when you're healthy. You may get this test if you're in the hospital or if you have a serious injury or illness. The test gives your doctor clues about how well your lungs, heart, and kidneys are working. You'll probably get other tests along with it. Every cell in your body needs oxygen to live. When you breathe in (inhale) and breathe out (exhale), your lungs move oxygen into your blood and push carbon dioxide out. That process, called gas exchange, provides the oxygen we (and all of our cells) need to survive. If you are having a hard time breathing, your doctor may use an arterial blood gas (ABG) test to help figure out what the problem is. Your doctor may ask for an arterial blood gas test to: You are likely to have an arterial blood gas test in a hospital, but your doctor may be able to do it in their office. Your doctor or another health care worker will use a small needle to take some of your blood, usually from your wrist. Sometimes they take it from an artery in your groin or on the inside of your arm above your elbow. Before the arterial blood gas test, they may apply pressure to the arteries in your wrist for several seconds. The procedure, called the modified Allen test, checks that blood flow to your hand is normal. In order to prepare for an arterial blood gas test, tell your doctor about all medications, supplements, and vitamins you're taking. If you're on oxygen therapy but are able to breathe without it, they might turn off your oxygen for 20 minutes for a "room air" test before the blood gas test. You may have a few minutes of discomfort during or after the test. Collecting blood from an artery typically hurts more than drawing it from a vein. Arteries are deeper than veins, and there are sensitive nerves nearby. You also may feel lightheaded, faint, dizzy, or nauseated while your blood is drawn. To lower the chance of bruising, you can gently press on the area for a few minutes after the needle comes out. Any test that involves using a needle carries some risks, including bleeding, infection, and bruising. You might have some soreness where the needle went in. Results of your arterial blood gas test usually are available in less than 15 minutes. But your doctor can't diagnose you based on an arterial blood gas test alone. So you'll probably get other tests, too. Your arterial blood gas test results may show whether: You are getting enough oxygen Your lungs are exhaling enough carbon dioxide Your kidneys are working properly You have a serious infection affecting perfusion (blood delivery) to your organs The numbers for normal results vary. Your doctor will interpret your ABG results as they relate to your medical history and your current condition. Your ABG results will play a part in your diagnosis and treatment. © 2021 WebMD, LLC. All rights reserved. View privacy policy and trust info

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