

Greenwich Hospital

What is a Complete Blood Count (CBC)

PATIENT/FAMILY INFORMATION SHEET

What is a Complete Blood Count?

A complete blood count, or **CBC**, is a blood test that provides detailed information regarding three types of cells in the body: White Blood Cells (WBC's), Red Blood Cells (RBC's), and platelets. The CBC also provides information regarding the hemoglobin and hematocrit count in the blood (See below).

All of these blood cells are made in the bone marrow, which is the spongy tissue filling the center of bones. It is common to have your CBC checked frequently while in the hospital or as a follow-up after treatments.

What are White Blood Cells?

White blood cells are commonly referred to as WBC's. These cells travel in the bloodstream to areas of infection to destroy the infecting source. They are the mobile units of the body's infection-fighting system.

What are Red Blood Cells?

Red blood cells are commonly referred to as RBC's. Their main function is to carry oxygen to and remove waste products from the body's tissues. These cells contain hemoglobin.

What is the Hemoglobin and Hematocrit?

The hemoglobin and hematocrit in your blood cell count is commonly referred to as the H & H.

- **Hemoglobin** (HGB) gives the red blood cells their color. Oxygen attaches to the hemoglobin in the red blood cells to be carried to the body tissues.
- **Hematocrit** (HCT) is the percentage of red blood cells in relation to your total blood volume.

What are platelets?

Platelets are a component of the CBC. They help to stop bleeding by forming blood clots.

What is a CBC with differential?

The differential (referred to as "the diff") is a component of the WBC's. It measures each of the five types of white blood cells—neutrophils, basophils, eosinophils, lymphocytes, and monocytes. Your physician may or may not order a differential depending upon the information needed.

What is an Absolute Neutrophil Count or ANC?

The ANC is the number of infection-fighting white blood cells in your blood. Neutrophils are the “soldiers” that fight infection. These cells destroy the infectious particles (such as bacteria or viruses) in the body. Neutrophils are divided into:

- **Segs:** mature neutrophils (sometimes referred to as “polys”)
- **Non-segs:** young neutrophils (sometimes referred to as “bands”).

What are the normal values in a CBC?

Normal values for a CBC test will vary depending upon age and sex. Your individual CBC values may also vary depending upon your current health condition. It is suggested that you discuss your bloodwork results with your physician or nurse.

What are the results of my recent CBC?

Your CBC results for: Date _____

WBC _____ HGB _____ HCT _____ PLT _____ ANC _____

Will I need a follow-up blood test?

Depending upon your condition, you may need to return for follow-up blood work. For oncology patients, a CBC is typically checked one week after chemotherapy is administered.

Reference: Medline Plus @ medlineplus.org (A service of the National Library of Medicine). Retrieved August 2004.

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