



## Understanding Laboratory Values

Lab values are blood tests that are performed to evaluate dietary management, medication compliance and an effective dialysis treatment. These blood tests are usually done monthly but some can be done more or less frequently. It is important for you and your family to understand what these tests are and how they affect your body.

You should know:

- What each test measures
- Why these tests are important to you
- What happens when results are out of normal range

Please note that the following lab tests are guidelines and may vary from person to person. The information is only a tool to help you manage your overall health. If you have any questions regarding your values please consult with your physician and dietitian.

- **BUN (Blood Urea Nitrogen)** – a waste product in the blood that comes from the breakdown of food protein. A high number usually means not enough dialysis to adequately clean the blood. It can also signal an active infection process in the body.
- **K<sup>+</sup> (Potassium)** – regulates muscle action. Too much or too little can affect the way your heart beats.
- **Ca (Calcium)** – helps support bone growth and muscle strength
- **PO<sub>4</sub> (Phosphorus)** – helps maintain bone strength. It is a mineral that works with calcium to keep the bones strong. Often a high phosphorus level will cause a low calcium level and vice versa.
- **Serum Albumin** – measures protein and nutritional status. A lower value usually means you need to eat more high protein foods.
- **HgB (Hemoglobin)** – the amount of red blood cells available to carry oxygen to all parts of the body

- **Hct (Hematocrit)** – percentage of your blood that is made up of red blood cells. The higher the percent of healthy blood cells in your blood stream the more oxygen is available for your body to use.
- **Glu (Glucose)** – necessary for energy and maintaining normal body tissue.

Remember that being actively involved in your care, having a good nutritional status, receiving adequate dialysis and a healthy attitude can contribute to a better quality of life and a sense of well-being.