

# CBC

## (complete blood count)

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### What is a CBC?

A CBC (complete blood count) is a common blood test that provides a snapshot of overall health. Doctors often order a CBC before surgery and to check for infection, anemia and other health concerns.

A CBC measures 3 main types of blood cells:

- Red blood cells – carry oxygen throughout the body
- White blood cells – help fight infection
- Platelets – help the blood to clot after a cut or injury

### What is a CBC with differential (diff)?

A CBC with diff checks more parts of the blood than a CBC. It also measures the percent of different types of white blood cells in the blood.

Normal blood test results vary and depend on a child's age, sex and medical condition. They are also unique to the lab where the CBC is done. The chart below shows what each part of the CBC measures. You and your doctor can use the "normal value" column to fill in what numbers are normal for your child.

CBC	What it is	Normal value for my child
Red blood cells (RBCs)	Total number of RBCs	
Hematocrit (Hct)	Percent (%) of total RBCs in a blood sample by volume	
Hemoglobin (Hgb)	Oxygen-carrying ability of the blood	
White blood cells (WBCs)	Blood cells that fight infection	
Platelets	Cell fragments that help the blood to clot	
Neutrophils	WBCs that fight germs, such as bacteria	
Eosinophils	WBCs that fight germs and that can be increased in allergic reactions	
Monocytes	WBCs that help fight infection by surrounding and destroying germs	

**In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.**

# CBC (complete blood count), continued

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CBC	What it is	Normal value for my child
Lymphocytes	WBCs that help fight germs and viruses like colds and flu	
Basophils	WBCs that are involved in allergic and hypersensitivity reactions	

## What do I do before the test?

The lab can get blood for the test from several places:

- A needle stick from your baby's heel or finger
- Drawing a small tube of blood from a vein in your child's arm or hand using a needle

If you know ahead of time that your child is going to have the blood test, a numbing cream could be put on the needle stick area. Ask your child's nurse or lab technician for more details about this medicine.

You can also warm fingers and feet to make it more comfortable to collect the blood. Use a blanket, socks or mittens to keep these areas warm before the test.

## When do I get the results?

Your child's doctor will give you the results. Results for this test are most often ready within 4 to 24 hours. It depends on the lab assigned by your insurance plan.

**This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.**

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