



Health & Laboratory Glossary

Plain language explanations of common terms you may see on a laboratory request, medical report or test result. Use this as a reference, then ask your clinician or laboratory team to explain your own results in context.

General education only

This glossary does not diagnose a condition or replace qualified medical advice. Preparation instructions, reference ranges and interpretation can vary by test, method and individual circumstances.

Biopsy

A small tissue sample collected for laboratory examination.

A biopsy can be collected during procedures such as endoscopy or by other methods. A pathology laboratory examines the tissue to provide information that helps the treating clinician investigate or diagnose a condition.

Blood group (ABO/Rh)

A classification based on the ABO and Rhesus blood group systems.

ABO groups are A, B, AB and O, while Rh status is commonly reported as positive or negative. Blood group information is important for transfusion compatibility and can also matter during pregnancy.

Blood screening

Testing donated blood for required safety markers before transfusion use.

Blood donation screening includes blood group testing and screening for specified transfusion transmissible infections according to applicable protocols. Screening is one part of a wider blood safety system designed to reduce transfusion risk.

Endoscopy

A procedure that uses a flexible camera to examine part of the digestive tract.

Gastroscopy examines the upper digestive tract and colonoscopy examines the large bowel. Depending on the procedure and findings, the clinician may take a biopsy or perform another appropriate intervention.

Fasting test

A test for which you may be asked not to eat for a specified period beforehand.

Preparation is test specific. If fasting or any fluid restriction is required, follow the exact instructions provided for your requested investigation rather than applying one rule to every blood test.

FBC (Full Blood Count)

A blood test that measures red cells, white cells and platelets.

A full blood count provides several measurements from one blood sample, including haemoglobin and blood cell counts. Clinicians use the pattern of results alongside symptoms and other information when assessing concerns such as anaemia, infection, inflammation or platelet disorders.

Genotype

Your inherited haemoglobin pattern, such as AA, AS, AC, SS or SC.

Haemoglobin genotype describes inherited forms of haemoglobin. Some patterns are carrier traits and others are associated with sickle cell disease or other haemoglobin disorders. A documented result can be useful for personal records and genetic counselling.

Genotype compatibility

How two inherited haemoglobin patterns may affect genetic risk for children.

For example, when both biological parents have the sickle cell trait (AS), each pregnancy has a one in four chance of an SS genotype, a one in two chance of AS and a one in four chance of AA. Genetic counselling can help couples understand individual results and options.

Haemoglobin (Hb)

The oxygen carrying protein inside red blood cells.

Haemoglobin is one of the measurements reported in a full blood count. A low value can be associated with anaemia, while a high value can have several possible causes. Interpretation depends on the complete blood count and clinical context.

HbA1c

A blood test that reflects average blood glucose over roughly two to three months.

HbA1c is used in diabetes assessment and monitoring. It gives a longer term view than a single glucose reading, although some medical conditions can affect interpretation and your clinician should place the result in context.

Lipid profile

A group of blood measurements used in cardiovascular risk assessment.

A lipid profile commonly includes total cholesterol, LDL cholesterol, HDL cholesterol and triglycerides. Results are interpreted with factors such as age, blood pressure, diabetes status, smoking history and other clinical information.

Liver function test (LFT)

A group of blood tests that measures liver related enzymes, proteins and other markers.

Liver panels can help clinicians look for patterns associated with liver injury or altered liver function. No single value provides a complete diagnosis, so results are interpreted together and in clinical context.

PCV (Packed Cell Volume)

The percentage of blood volume made up of red blood cells.

Also called haematocrit. PCV is interpreted with haemoglobin, red cell indices and the clinical picture when assessing anaemia, dehydration or an unusually high red cell concentration.

Pre-employment medical

A health assessment completed before or around the start of employment.

The scope depends on the role, workplace risks and the organisation's agreed requirements. It may include a medical history, examination and selected investigations, with appropriate attention to confidentiality and applicable workplace policies.

Turnaround time (TAT)

The expected time between sample collection and result availability.

Turnaround varies by investigation, sample type, collection time and whether additional review or confirmatory work is needed. The team can confirm the expected timing for your specific request.

Need help with a term or result?

Use www.lifecentermedicals.com to find a test, contact the Life Centre team or read the health insight guides. Your clinician should interpret results in the context of your health.

Clinical reference sources

WHO - Testing of Donated Blood
CDC - A1C Test for Diabetes and Prediabetes
NHLBI - Blood Tests and Complete Blood Count guidance
NIDDK - Liver blood test guidance

Reviewed for publication: 12 August 2026. For questions about a Life Centre test or service, contact the team through www.lifecentermedicals.com.