

# My Treatment: Knowing My Lab Numbers

Knowing what your lab numbers are helps you to see how your body is doing with dialysis. The clinic will draw and review your labs (chemistry and blood counts) at least once a month. These lab tests look at several things including the phosphorus, calcium, and parathyroid hormone (PTH) levels in your blood, and that you are getting enough dialysis.

## Phosphorous

 Your phosphorus level goal is to be within the normal values of **3.0 to 5.0 mg/dl**.

### Symptoms Related to High Phosphorus Levels

- High PTH levels on your lab results
- Itching that you cannot relieve
- Red eyes
- Bone and joint pain

### Serious Complications of Uncontrolled Phosphorous

- Severe bone disease
- Heart disease with increased risk of death
- Mineral deposit build up in kidneys, heart, lungs, eyes, skin, and blood vessels

### Causes of High Phosphorous Levels

- Not taking the medication known as phosphate binders with your meals
- Eating foods high in phosphorous
- Inadequate dialysis by missed treatments or shortened treatment time



## Treatment with Phosphate Binders

Phosphate binders help to get excess phosphate out of your body in your stool. These medicines lessen the amount of phosphate that gets into your blood by “binding” to the phosphate in your digestive tract to make a compound that is not absorbed into your blood.

Some examples of phosphate binders are Calcium Carbonate (Tums), Calcium Acetate (Phoslo), Sevelamer (Renvela) and Lanthanum (Fosrenol).

## Calcium

 Your calcium level goal is to be within the normal values of **8.5 to 10.4 mg/dl**.

### Symptoms Related to High Calcium Levels

- Muscle weakness and fatigue
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Abdominal cramping
- Loss of appetite
- Constipation

### Causes of High Calcium Levels

- Medications containing calcium or vitamin D

### Symptoms Related to Low Calcium Levels

- Muscle twitching and cramping
- Seizures
- Hair loss
- Cataracts

### Causes of Low Calcium Levels

- Not taking binders with your meals
- Eating food with a lot of phosphorus

## Parathyroid Hormone (PTH) Levels

Knowing what your lab numbers are helps you to see how your body is doing with dialysis. The clinic will draw and review your labs (chemistry and blood counts) at least once a month. These lab tests look at several things including the phosphorus, calcium, and parathyroid hormone (PTH) levels in your blood, and that you are getting enough dialysis.

 Your PTH level goal is less than **300pg/ml**.

Treatment for secondary Hyperparathyroidism (elevated PTH levels)

- Limit high phosphorous foods in your diet
- Take phosphate binders to control phosphorous levels
  - Vitamin D therapy as directed
  - Calcitriol (Rocaltrol or Calcijex)
  - Paricalcitol (Zemplar)
  - Doxercalciferol (Hectorol)

## My Questions

Ask your Care Team:

- What are my labs right now?
- What can I do to improve them?
- What are some of the other labs I should know about?

Source: <http://kidney.niddk.nih.gov/kudiseases/pubs/pdf/eatrightthemodialysis.pdf>

Norris, Keith. "Phosphate Binders: What Are They And How Do They Work?" RENALIFE, Vol. 16, No. 5, March 2001. [www.aakp.org](http://www.aakp.org)

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