**Blood Tests at 28 Beaumont Street: Patient guide 2015**

A blood test is when a sample of blood is taken for testing in a laboratory. Blood tests have a wide range of uses (for example, to assess your general state of health, to aid diagnosis and to monitor how well certain organs are functioning) and are one of the most common types of medical test.

A blood test usually involves the phlebotomist taking a blood sample from a blood vessel in your arm, usually just inside of the elbow or wrist, where the veins are relatively close to the surface.

If your doctor asks you to book a blood test, they should explain what the tests are for and how you should follow up the results. Please book the blood test appointment (usually with Vikki, our phlebotomist) with Reception. It is a good idea to eat and drink normally before the blood test unless you have been told that it is a ‘fasting blood test’ when you should avoid food and drinks (except water) from midnight the night before the test. If you have a needle phobia or faint easily, please tell us so that we can take appropriate measures.

**Common blood tests:**

Haematology

* FBC (full blood count – looks at red and white blood cells)
* Clotting, INR
* Iron studies
* Vitamin B12
* Folate

Biochemistry

* U&Es (Urea & Electrolytes – guide to kidney function)
* eGFR (estimated Glomerular Filtration Rate, again looks at kidney function)
* LFTs (liver function tests – includes Bilirubin, Alanine transaminase, Alkaline Phosphatase and Albumin)
* TFTs (thyroid function test, TSH done as initial screening test locally)
* Bone Profile (Calcium, phosphate)
* CRP (C-reactive protein, marker for inflammation and infection)
* Urate (high levels may cause gout)
* PSA (prostate specific antigen)
* Glucose (either random or fasting)
* Lipids (cholesterol, triglyceride)
* HBA1c (glycosylated haemoglobin, guide to blood sugar levels)

Immunology

* Helicobacter Pylori serology
* Hepatitis and HIV screen
* Rubella antibodies
* Coeliac Disease screen (TGA)

Only the doctors can order new blood tests. Please discuss any requests with them ahead of booking a phlebotomy appointment. Private blood tests need to be paid for in advance.

Most of our blood tests are done at the John Radcliffe Hospital and we are dependent on timing of specimen transport – consequently we cannot take blood after mid-afternoon or at the weekend surgeries. Many standard tests are processed quickly and turned around within a couple of days. Some tests take longer (for example, Vitamin D assays, Helicobacter Pylori serology, immunology tests), up to 2 weeks, and other more specialist tests which are sometimes sent to other laboratories, longer still.

 Your doctor may have told you to make a follow-up appointment after the blood test. Please do this if so, as it provides a good opportunity to discuss the blood results and decide if any further action needs to be taken. It is worth checking with the GP that you understand what should happen next at the end of any appointment.

We receive results electronically and these are reviewed by a GP every working day. They will mark results as ‘normal’, ‘not needing action’ or ‘abnormal’. If abnormal, they may be able to be dealt with routinely or require more urgent action. Sometimes, it is unclear if a result is truly abnormal – for example, potassium levels may be affected by the air temperature and the time it has taken to get the specimen to the lab. In order to make sure, we may have to ask you to repeat the blood test.

We ask that you call after 11am to check your results. Please allow 5 working days after standard blood tests, or longer if specified by us. We do take action on abnormal results by contacting you – but it is an important safety check that you also call. Please make sure that we have a correct and up-to-date telephone number to contact you urgently if needed. We are unable to leave messages on anonymous answerphones and require your permission to leave answer phone messages in general. Reception staff are not clinically trained: they will be able to see and relay your results and any comments doctors have made, but will not know how to interpret them or whether there are further outstanding tests. If there are any issues, they will put you on a same day telephone call-back list to speak with a doctor.

Remember, that we cannot discuss results with family members or others, unless there is express and recorded permission to do so in the medical record.

Paper copies of blood test results can be requested – please fill in the Access to Medical Records Request form in reception. We do not have the resources to routinely email or send copies of blood test results to patients.

**So key points:**

* What blood tests am I having done and why?
* Call the practice to check results…
* Make sure we have your correct telephone contact number.
* Stick to the follow-up arrangements agreed with your GP