

## UNDERSTANDING YOUR BLOOD RESULTS



## WHY DO YOU NEED TO CHECK MY BLOOD SO OFTEN?

Every month we take a series of blood samples to check how well you are dialyzing, and to also how well you are responding to other treatments for your anaemia and diet.

We take the blood samples this often to make sure we can change your treatment prescriptions early enough to prevent you suffering any complications.

Knowing your blood results will help you to:

- Assess for yourself how well your treatment is going
- Explain some of your symptoms
- Know if your treatment needs changing

## HOW WELL AM I DIALYZING?

**Urea and creatinine** are two of the most important waste products removed by the kidneys. We use complicated numbers derived from your urea levels before and after dialysis to measure how well your dialysis is working – this is your dialysis adequacy.

We call this measure your Kt/V, and you may have heard your care team talking about this. These figures give us an indication of how well we are dialyzing you.

The target we aim for is a minimum Kt/V of 1.2. Research has shown that if your Kt/V is less than 1.2 then you probably need more dialysis to keep you well.

This could mean an increase in dialysis time.



## HOW DO YOU CHECK MY ANAEMIA?

**Hemoglobin (Hb) is the substance in red blood cells which carries oxygen around the body. Too low a level of Hb is known as anaemia.**

Anaemia causes tiredness, shortness of breath and paleness – it may need treatment with iron or with erythropoietin (EPO) injections.

Your dosage of EPO and iron is aimed at keeping your Hb level between 10.5 and 11.5dg/l.

## HOW DOES MY DIET AFFECT MY BLOOD RESULTS?

**Albumin** is an important protein in your blood. Your albumin level is linked to how well you are eating, and how rich your diet is in proteins. Low albumin levels may indicate that you are undernourished or that you have been unwell recently.

We aim to keep your albumin level above 40g/l.

We will give you more information on diet and your protein intake. You can always discuss this further with your dietician, who can help you choose the best diet for you.

**Potassium** is a mineral that is normally removed by the kidneys and by dialysis. Too high or too low a potassium level may cause a disturbance to the rhythm of your heart. It is important that you follow the advice about eating food high in potassium, e.g. fresh fruits.

## I HAVE HEARD OF YOU TALK ABOUT CALCIUM AND PHOSPHATE: WHAT IS THAT ABOUT?

**Calcium and phosphate** are the most important minerals in your bones. Levels of calcium and phosphate act like a see-saw if one rises the other falls. Phosphate rises in renal failure, and may cause itching. Calcium tends to fall.

**Parathyroid hormone (PTH)** becomes very high in renal failure to restore normal calcium levels. This is one cause of renal bone disease. Phosphate binding tablets (e.g. Calcichew) and Vitamin D (e.g. alfacalcidol) help prevent this.

## WHY IS MY BLOOD PRESSURE MEASURED SO OFTEN?

- **Blood pressure** is the pressure produced by the heart to pump blood round the body. Too high a blood pressure increases the risk of heart attacks and strokes and is treated by blood pressure tablets. The ideal range for blood pressure is below 140/90.
- It is important that if you are prescribed medication for your blood pressure you take it as instructed. However, your blood pressure can be high because you have are carrying too much fluid. Therefore follow the advice you have been given by your care team about your salt and fluid intake. Remember a high salt diet can make you thirsty.

## SO WHAT NEXT?

Now you have read through this a nurse or doctor will come back to answer any other questions you might have. Remember, you can ask questions at any time.

There will be other booklets for you to read later that will include the following topics:

- Hemodialysis – a brief introduction
- How does hemodialysis work?
- Looking after your vascular access
- Managing you fluid intake
- The dialysis diet
- Increasing your independence
- Transplantation

We hope that this will help you to adapt to dialysis, helping you to feel better.

**Remember, you can ask questions about your treatment at any time.**



B. Braun Avitum AG | Schwarzenberger Weg 73-79 | 34212 Melsungen |  
Germany

Phone +49 5661 71-2624 | Fax +49 5661 75-2624 | [dialysis@bbraun.com](mailto:dialysis@bbraun.com) |  
[www.bbraun-dialysis.com](http://www.bbraun-dialysis.com)