

# What Do My Lab Results Mean? HIV and Laboratory Tests

## What are some other important tests?

### Drug Resistance Test

- HIV can change form, making it resistant to some HIV medicines.
- The drug resistance test helps your health care provider choose the HIV medicines that will work for you.

### Tests for Other Infections

- HIV weakens the immune system, leaving people vulnerable to other infections.
- Health care providers test for tuberculosis, hepatitis B and C infections, and other potential illnesses.
- The treatment for another infection may affect HIV treatment.

### Complete Blood Count

- Measures how many red blood cells (carry oxygen around the body), white blood cells (fight infections), platelets (help blood clot to stop bleeding).
- This helps health care providers keep track of your overall health and spot potential medical problems.

### Blood Chemistry Tests

- This group of tests measures several different chemicals in your blood to help monitor the health of your organs, especially your liver, kidneys, and electrolytes.
- Health care providers use blood chemistry tests to look for side effects caused by HIV medicines.

Check with your healthcare provider on how often these tests should be done.

Taking ART (antiretroviral treatment) as directed prevents HIV from destroying CD4 cells and helps lower your viral load.

You want your CD4 count to be  
**HIGH**  
CD4 Cell Count

CD4 cells are specialized cells of the immune system destroyed by HIV. A CD4 cell count measures how many CD4 cells are in your blood. The higher your CD4 cell count, the healthier your immune system.



You want your viral load to be  
**LOW**  
HIV Viral Load Test

An HIV viral load test, also called an HIV RNA test, tracks how many HIV particles are in a sample of your blood. This is called your viral load. The lower your viral load, the lower the amount of HIV that is detectable in your blood.

For more information, visit [HIVinfo.NIH.gov](http://HIVinfo.NIH.gov).