

Patient & Family Guide to Laboratory Testing Checklist

This checklist is intended to be used in conjunction with the “Patient & Family Guide to Laboratory Testing: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ): Understanding Your Lab Test Results” guide. Both the guide and the checklist are designed for patient and family advocates, and other members of the healthcare team, as they discuss what laboratory tests mean to patients and their families.

This resource is made freely available through the ASCP Negotiation and Advocacy Toolbox and is co-endorsed the ASCP Patient Champions program.



1. Your Lab Test Results - Explain the purpose of the tests.

2. Factors Affecting Turnaround Time (TAT)

- **In-House vs. Send-Outs:** In-house tests are faster.
- **Test Complexity:** Routine tests are quicker; specialized tests take longer.
- **Specimen Transport & Processing:** Time needed for these steps affects TAT.
- **STAT vs. Routine Orders:** Urgent tests are prioritized but may still take time.

3. Understanding High/Low Flags

- **Reference Range:** Represents values for 95% of healthy people.
- **Individual Variability:** Slight deviations may not be significant.
- **Context Matters:** Clinicians consider symptoms, history, and other tests.

4. Abnormal Results and Clinician Contact

- **21st Century Cures Act:** Patients get results quickly.
- **Clinicians Need Time:** Providers review and compare results before contacting.
- **Not All Abnormal Results Are Concerning:** Some will be discussed at the next visit.
- **Reach Out if Concerned:** Contact your provider if you have questions.

5. Preparing for Laboratory Tests

- **Fasting:** Required for tests like glucose levels and lipid panels.
- **Timed Testing:** Some tests need to be done at specific times (e.g., cortisol levels).
- **Medication Restrictions:** Certain medications may need to be paused (e.g., for coagulation studies).
- **Hydration & Diet:** Dehydration or certain foods can affect results.

6. Variability in Lab Results

- **Different Methods & Equipment:** Labs may use different instruments.
- **Reference Ranges Vary:** Based on the lab's patient population.
- **Sample Handling & Processing:** Storage and transport can impact results.
- **Point-of-Care vs. Lab Testing:** Bedside tests may differ from central lab tests.

7. Importance and Value of Routine Lab Testing

- **Early Disease Detection:** Identifies conditions like diabetes early.
- **Monitoring Chronic Conditions:** Tracks treatment effectiveness.
- **Medication Management:** Ensures safe and effective medication levels.
- **Pre-Surgical Screening:** Identifies risks before procedures.

8. Questions or Concerns?

- **Get in contact:** Provide business card and/or encourage patients to reach out to their healthcare provider or the lab for clarification.

