

# Understanding Abnormal Lab Values and Imaging

Lab tests and imaging play an important part in understanding your health. However, these tests alone do NOT provide a complete picture of your health. Here are some tips to help understand any abnormal labs or imaging:

1

## What does a lab value mean?

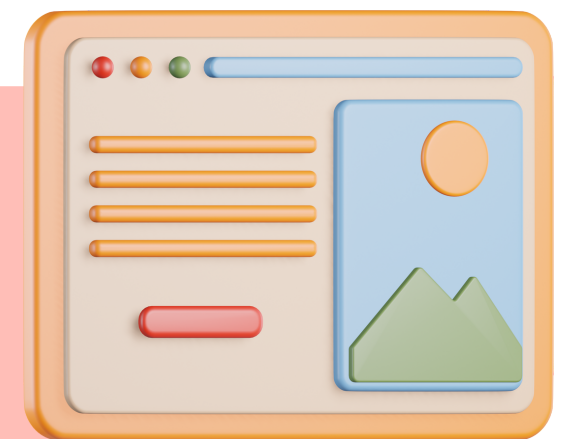
Labs are only useful when comparing them to a reference range. The reference range is a group of numbers that 95% of the normal population would fall into. If your lab values are within the reference range, you are normal.



2

## What if I am close to the reference range?

If you are within the reference range or close to it there could be another factor causing a slight laboratory abnormality. Foods, drinks, medicines, stress, vigorous exercise, a sickness, and even the person drawing your labs can all cause small variations in lab values.



3

## What if my imaging results show a finding?

Everyone has different anatomy; no two bodies are the same. Radiologists write both normal and abnormal findings in their reports and it can be hard to distinguish one from the other. Some findings are "incidental" which means "found coincidentally". Normal and incidental findings usually do not require any actions.



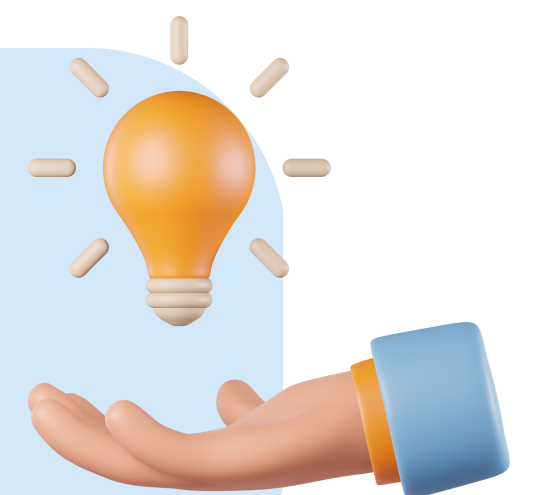
4

## What can I do if I have a question?

Do **NOT** panic. Many factors can cause abnormal values. Contact the person who ordered your test and ask:

**"Does this result mean I need to take any immediate actions?"**

- **If yes**, follow their instructions.
- **If no**, plan to discuss the question you have at your next visit.



**Disclaimer:** Med Ed Materials, 2023. This information is intended to supplement, not contradict, the medical advice of your practitioner. For questions or more info, contact your practitioner.

**Sources:** <https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/how-to-understand-your-lab-results/>  
<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/article-read-radiology-report>

[www.mededmaterials.org](http://www.mededmaterials.org)

