

Name of the test

Hematocrit

Alternative name(s) of the test

None.

What is this test used for?

Hematocrit is a ratio of erythrocytes to the volume of whole blood and it is usually expressed in percentages. This means that when the amount of red blood cells is decreased, hematocrit is decreased as well and if more erythrocytes are produced, then hematocrit will be increased too. Hematocrit also depends on the volume of whole blood.

When is the test ordered?

The hematocrit test is often performed with other tests, such as a hemoglobin test or as a part of complete blood count. It is ordered as a part of a general health checkup, or when a patient has symptoms of anemia, polycythemia or any other condition that affects the erythrocytes.

How is this test performed?

A blood sample is needed for the test. It can be taken from a vein or from a fingertip.

How to prepare for the test

No preparation is needed.

Interpretation of results

Lower-than-normal levels of hematocrit may be due to various reasons including:

- Iron or B12 deficiency
- Different types of anemia
- Chronic loss of blood
- Some cancers

Higher-than-normal levels of hematocrit may be due to:

- Polycythemia
- Smoking
- Congenital heart disease
- Pulmonary disease