

Name of the test

Hemoglobin test

Alternative name(s) of the test

Hb.

What is this test used for?

Hemoglobin is a protein found in erythrocytes. It carries oxygen from lungs to tissues. This test measures the amount of hemoglobin in the blood. The hemoglobin level in the blood depends on the amount of erythrocytes, so the hemoglobin test is used to screen for, diagnose or monitor the diseases affecting the red blood cells, as well as hemoglobin itself. The hemoglobin test is often performed along with other tests.

When is the test ordered?

The hemoglobin test is often performed with other tests, such as a hematocrit or a 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 disorder 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 hemoglobin 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 hemoglobin may be due to:

- Polycythemia
- Smoking
- Congenital heart disease
- Pulmonary disease