



# Learn Your Labs

What is it?	Why is it important?
<b>Albumin</b>	A blood protein that measures if you are eating enough protein and have enough protein stored in your body. An albumin level of 4.0 is your target. Protein helps build muscle, helps to heal wounds with new tissue growth, and fights infection.
<b>Hemoglobin</b>	Low levels are common in people with kidney disease because of bleeding and low hormone (erythropoietin) levels. Hemoglobin is a protein in red blood cells that carries oxygen. If your red blood cells are low, your heart will have to work extra hard to get oxygen where it is needed.
<b>Phosphorus</b>	A common mineral found in your bones. It helps with building strong bones and teeth, helps your body use energy, and keeps a normal pH balance. Healthy kidneys remove the extra phosphorus from the body through urine. If you do not have normal kidney function, the extra phosphorus can build up in your blood. Most people on dialysis must avoid eating foods high in phosphorus and take phosphate binders. If there is too much phosphorus in the blood, calcium is pulled out of the bones and this can cause renal bone disease.
<b>Calcium</b>	Another mineral that is important for bone health. Calcium is found in many foods and common dialysis medicines called phosphate binders. Be sure to take your binders as directed and work with your dietician to keep your calcium in balance.
<b>Potassium</b>	A mineral that is in many of the foods you eat, it is also removed by healthy kidneys and builds up in patients with kidney disease. Often there are no signs of high potassium. High potassium levels affect your heart. You should limit foods and drinks high in potassium. A safe range for your potassium is 3.5-5.5.