

DATE:	20 July 2026
TO:	All Healthcare Providers
FROM:	Clinical Biochemistry, Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL)
RE:	Update to Plasma Catecholamines Testing

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Key Message

- Effective July 28, 2026, the Analytical Toxicology laboratory at the Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) Calgary Hub Lab will resume in-house testing for Plasma Catecholamines (PCAT; test components include Dopamine, Epinephrine and Norepinephrine).
 - This was an External Sendout (ESO) test since 2022 ([Referral of Plasma Catecholamines Testing and Tube Type Change](#))

Background

- PCAT serves as an auxiliary test for plasma and 24-hour urine metanephrine testing for the diagnosis and evaluation of pheochromocytoma and paraganglioma.
- PCAT is also an auxiliary test to 24-hour urine Homovanillic acid (HVA) and Vanillylmandelic acid (VMA) testing for the diagnosis and evaluation of neuroblastoma and related tumors.
- The PCAT test can also be used to diagnose neurogenic orthostatic hypotension.
- A new testing method for PCAT will be implemented in the Analytical Toxicology lab to support testing.

How this will impact you

- Be aware the new PCAT reference intervals differ from the current ESO lab:

Test Component	ESO Lab Reference Interval	New Reference Interval (July 28th)	Appended Interpretive Comment
Dopamine	<0.760 nmol/L	<0.16 nmol/L	Higher catecholamine concentrations are observed in specimens collected in seated and standing positions. Other factors such as noise, stress, discomfort and the consumption of food, caffeinated beverages or nicotine may increase catecholamines production and should be avoided. Reference intervals have been established only for patients resting in a supine position.
Epinephrine	<0.800 nmol/L	<1.1 nmol/L	
Norepinephrine	0.8-3.40 nmol/L	0.5-3.1 nmol/L	

Action Required

- There are no changes to the ordering, collection, or transportation of these samples.
- Please note the updated reference intervals for PCAT test interpretation.

Questions/Concerns

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Approved by

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- Dr. Paul Klonowski, Associate Medical Director, Hub Lab, South Sector, APL