

## Tumor Markers

Tumor markers are substances, often proteins, which are produced by the cancer tissue itself or sometimes by the body in response to a cancer growth. Because some of these substances can be detected in body samples such as blood, urine, and tissue, these markers may be used, along with other tests and procedures, to help detect and diagnose some types of cancer, predict and monitor a person's response to certain treatments, and detect recurrence.

Newer types of tests have been developed that look for changes in genetic material (DNA, RNA), rather than proteins, in patient samples. The genetic changes have been found to be associated with certain cancers and can be used as tumor markers to help determine prognosis, guide targeted treatment, and/or detect cancers early on.

While tumor marker tests can provide very useful information, they do have limitations. Many tumor markers may also be elevated in persons with diseases other than cancer. Some tumor markers are specific for a particular type of cancer, while others are seen in several different types of cancer.

Not every person with a particular type of cancer will have an elevated level of the corresponding tumor marker and not every cancer has a tumor marker that has been identified as associated with it. Tumor markers alone are not diagnostic for cancer; for some types of cancer, they provide additional information that can be considered in conjunction with a patient's medical history and physical exam as well as other laboratory and/or imaging tests.

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### Established Tumor Indicators

Screen. Because most tumor markers are not sensitive or specific enough, these tests are not well suited for screening the general population; however, a few may be used to screen people who are at high risk because they have a strong family history or specific risk factors for a particular cancer.

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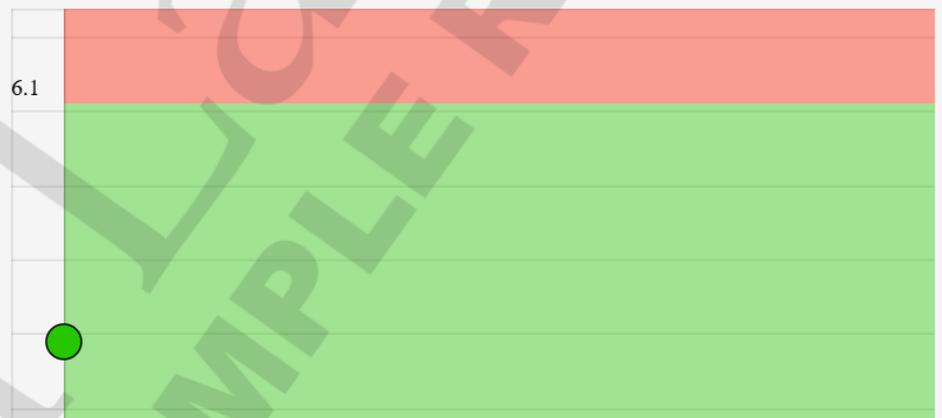
ALPHA FETOPROT...  
(ng/mL)

2.9

Range: <6.1

### ALPHA FETOPROTEIN, TUMOR MARKER

(ng/mL)



### Result Comments

This test was performed using the Beckman Coulter chemiluminescent method. Values obtained from different assay methods cannot be used interchangeably. AFP levels, regardless of value, should not be interpreted as absolute evidence of the presence or absence of disease.