



The Beryllium Lymphocyte Proliferation Test

The BeLPT

The Beryllium Lymphocyte Proliferation Test (BeLPT) is a laboratory test that examines how a type of disease-fighting blood cell in our bodies — called lymphocytes — reacts to beryllium. It is performed on blood drawn from a vein in your arm. If the BeLPT determines that you have been sensitized to beryllium, you may wish to pursue further medical evaluation to find out if you have Chronic Beryllium Disease (CBD).

The Meaning of Test Results

If your cells did not react strongly to beryllium, then your test result is called "normal" or "non-reactive." The majority of those exposed to beryllium will not become sensitized. For those who do, sensitization can occur within a short period of time after initial exposure or it can take years after the initial exposure before sensitization occurs.

If your cells react strongly to beryllium, then the BeLPT result is called "abnormal" or "reactive." The first thing we need to do is retest your blood to confirm the results. Certain medical tests are difficult to interpret and so physicians like to run a second test to confirm that no error was made.

If the second round of testing is also abnormal, it means that you have been exposed to beryllium and your body's lymphocytes react strongly to beryllium. In other words, you are sensitized to beryllium.

Being sensitized to beryllium means that you are more likely to develop Chronic Beryllium Disease than others with similar exposure who have a normal BeLPT. However, not everyone who is sensitized to beryllium develops CBD.

Having an abnormal BeLPT does not imply that you are sick or will get sick. It does mean that you may want to pursue further medical evaluation to see if you show any evidence of having Chronic Beryllium Disease. You do not need to have any additional evaluation if you do not want it.

If your BeLPT results are confirmed by a second test to be reactive, the Office of Occupational Medicine will notify your Regional Administrator or National Office Director who can follow the procedure in the CSHO Medical Examination program to request an appropriate accommodation for you.

If your BeLPT is confirmed reactive, you should discuss the result with your personal physician, especially if you are being treated for another health condition. Upon your request, the results of the BeLPT will be sent to the doctors you are seeing.

Chronic Beryllium Disease occurs only in people who have been exposed to beryllium, so most primary care health care providers have not had the opportunity to treat individuals with CBD. For this reason, you may wish to consult a health care provider who is familiar with Chronic Beryllium Disease. Be sure to check if your medical insurance covers any health care provider visits that you schedule, although you may be eligible for medical coverage under the Workers' Compensation Program if you are sensitized to beryllium or if you are diagnosed with Chronic Beryllium Disease.

Most exposures to beryllium occur in the workplace. However, there are documented cases in which beryllium-sensitization and/or Chronic Beryllium Disease have occurred in persons with no known occupational exposure to beryllium.



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