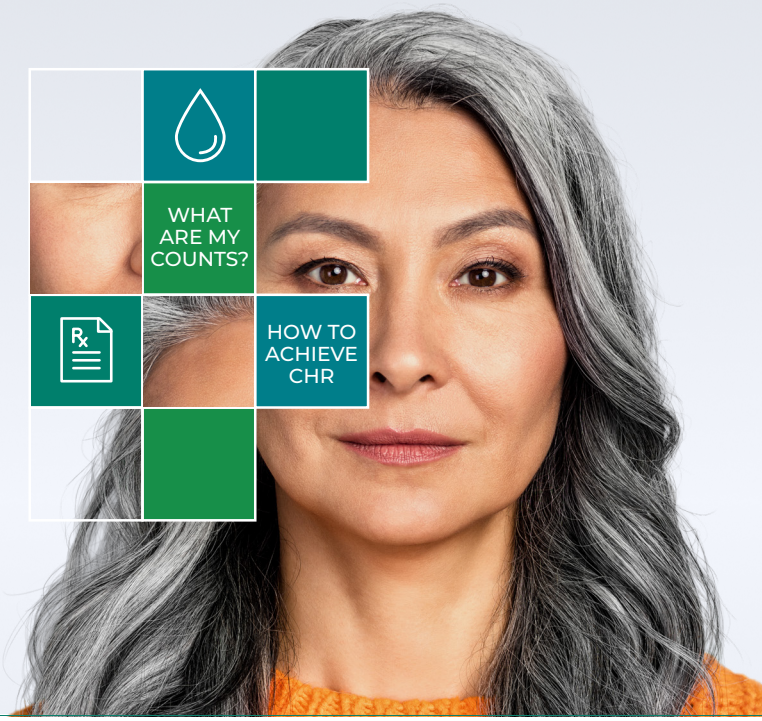
PIECETOGETHERPV

UNDERSTANDING BLOOD COUNTS

is a key piece of your care plan



Taking charge of polycythemia vera (PV) starts with staying on top of your complete blood count (CBC) results. These tests will help your doctor see how well your treatment is working and if you're at risk for developing certain complications.

Monitoring your CBC will also help your doctor determine whether you've achieved **complete hematologic response (CHR)**, which means all 3 blood counts have returned to normal and you haven't needed a phlebotomy in the past 3 months.

This guide will help you:

- Learn how CHR helps your doctor see the whole picture of your PV
- Understand the components of a CBC and what they mean
- Find out what's considered normal and how abnormal results may affect your care
- Track your target levels and test results over time

Testing and monitoring

CBC COMPONENTS

Regular CBC tests will help your doctor measure whether your disease is progressing, assess how well your treatment is working, and determine if you may be at risk for certain PV complications, such as blood clots, heart attack, and stroke.

Red blood cells (RBC)
Carry oxygen throughout the body

White blood cells (WBC)
Help fight infection and disease

Platelets
Help form blood clots and stop or prevent bleeding

Hematocrit (HCT)
Percentage of red blood cells in the total blood volume

Hemoglobin (HB or HGB)
Protein in red blood cells that carries oxygen to organs

Red cell distribution width (RDW)
Measures the variation in red blood cell size and volume

Mean corpuscular volume (MCV)
Average size of red blood cells

Mean corpuscular hemoglobin (MCH)
Average amount of hemoglobin per red blood cell

Mean corpuscular hemoglobin concentration (MCHC)
Average concentration of hemoglobin in red blood cells

In PV, all blood counts are important
While managing hematocrit levels has traditionally been the focus of PV care, your white blood cells and platelets are also important. Looking at all your blood counts together helps you and your doctor see the full picture and make better treatment decisions.

What do your blood tests mean?

See below for the common CBC test components, what's considered normal, and what the results could mean for your PV. Reference ranges vary by lab, so be sure to ask your doctor what's right for you.

Test component / Normal ranges	Connection to PV	Related symptoms
Red blood cells (RBC) Male: 4.35-5.65 trillion cells/L Female: 3.92-5.13 trillion cells/L	High RBC means your bone marrow is producing too many red blood cells. With PV, **having too many red blood cells can thicken your blood and decrease blood flow**, which can lead to serious thrombotic events, such as blood clots, stroke, and heart attack.	Headache, dizziness, fatigue, blurred (or double) vision, itchiness, unusual bleeding (nose, gums), shortness of breath
White blood cells (WBC) 3.4-9.6 billion cells/L	Elevated white blood cells often mean your body is fighting an infection or inflammation. People with PV may also have high WBC levels, which increases the risk of blood clots, heart attack, and stroke. **High WBC can also be a sign that PV is progressing** into a more serious type of blood cancer, including acute myeloid leukemia (AML).	Fever, fatigue, pain, difficulty breathing, wheezing, rash, unexpected weight loss, night sweats
Platelets Male: 135-317 billion/L Female: 157-371 billion/L	Having too many platelets in the blood is called "thrombocythemia." Because they help form blood clots, **having too many platelets increases the risk of blood clots, heart attack, or stroke**.	Typically none at first, but possibly headache, dizziness, bruising easily, unusual bleeding from your nose or mouth, bleeding in the stomach or intestinal tract
Hematocrit (HCT) Male: 38.3-48.6% Female: 35.5-44.9%	The overproduction of red blood cells in PV results in high hematocrit levels. Dehydration can also raise HCT.	Fatigue, dizziness, shortness of breath
Hemoglobin (HB or HBG) Male: 13.2-16.6 grams/dL Female: 11.6-15 grams/dL	High hemoglobin can mean your body needs more oxygen-carrying capacity or your bone marrow is producing too many red blood cells.	Fatigue, headache, dizziness, itchy skin, bruising easily, sweating more than usual, painful joint swelling

L = liter; dL = deciliter

Putting all the pieces together

In addition to monitoring your CBC, your doctor may want to track your complete hematologic response (CHR) and comprehensive disease control to see how well your PV is controlled.

	Complete hematologic response (CHR)	Comprehensive disease control
All 3 blood counts (RBC, WBC, and platelets) back to normal	✓	✓
No phlebotomy needed in the past 3 months	✓	✓
Normal spleen size		✓
No thromboembolic events		✓

Self-advocacy tip:
If your doctor doesn't measure your CHR and comprehensive disease control already, be sure to speak up and ask for them as part of your PV care plan.

Blood test tracker

Tracking your CBC results over time can help you and your care team spot changes early and inform adjustments of your treatment. Use the space below to write down your target levels and track your test results.

Red blood cells (RBC)	White blood cells (WBC)	Platelets	Hematocrit (HCT)	Hemoglobin (HB or HGB)
My Target: _____	My Target: _____	My Target: _____	My Target: _____	My Target: _____
Date: ___/___/____ Results: _____	Date: ___/___/____ Results: _____	Date: ___/___/____ Results: _____	Date: ___/___/____ Results: _____	Date: ___/___/____ Results: _____
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Remember: Your CBC numbers are more than just lab results. They're critical pieces of the PV puzzle. By tracking them and working closely with your care team, you can take an active role in managing your PV.

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US-PV-2500059 (v3.0) 12/2025

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