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Laboratory diagnosis of zinc deficiency.

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Abstract

Zinc status in human subjects is assessed by measurement of zinc in plasma, erythrocytes, neutrophils, lymphocytes, and hair. Available data indicate that zinc in neutrophils and the assay of activity of alkaline phosphatase in neutrophils may be the best tools for the diagnosis of zinc deficiency. Measurement of zinc in the plasma is simple and readily available in many laboratories. Plasma zinc is useful provided the plasma is unhemolyzed and conditions, such as infections, acute stress, myocardial infarction and intravascular hemolysis, are ruled out. Inasmuch as hair and erythrocytes turn over slowly, their zinc levels do not reflect recent changes with respect to zinc status. Other useful parameters for assessment of zinc status include metabolic balance studies, urinary zinc excretion. Cu:Zn ratio, zinc tolerance test, and measurement of activities of zinc-dependent enzymes in suitable biological samples.

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