

Measuring Albumin

What is Albumin?

Albumin is a type of protein that your body uses as a building block.



Two Ways to Measure Protein

Protein is measured in your blood to see if you are getting enough nutrition. People with kidney problems who have blood protein levels in the normal range live longer. It's best not to eat too little—or too much—protein.

Protein levels are also measured in urine. Some kidney diseases lead to a loss of protein into the urine. A dipstick may be used first to see if you have protein in your urine. If you do, the doctor may follow up with a one-time sample of your urine, or maybe a 24-hour urine test to see how much protein is present. Print these [24-hour urine test tips](#) if your doctor says you need this test.



When Urine Looks Foamy

Some kidney problems can cause changes in the color or amount of your urine. Diseases that damage the nephrons inside the kidneys can let protein leak out of the blood and into the urine. If this happens, you might notice that your urine looks bubbly or foamy.



What Does Albumin Do for You?

Albumin helps keep the right amount of water inside your cells, in between your cells, and in your bloodstream. It also carries key nutrients, like calcium, around your body. Since protein is vital, your body will steal it out of your muscles if you don't have enough in your blood. This can lead to muscle wasting that can include your heart.



U.S. Air Force photo by Sandy Healy

What You Can Do About Albumin

You need to eat some protein to keep your blood levels of albumin in the normal range. But, eating too much protein can cause a build-up of wastes if you have a kidney problem. Eating moderate portions can help make sure that you have the right amount—but not too much. Your dietitian will help you plan meals with the right amount of protein for you. To learn more about protein visit the Nutrition Room.



What You Can Do About Urine Protein

If you have a kidney problem that causes protein to “spill” into your urine, taking some types of blood pressure pills may help you. Two classes of blood pressure pills called ACE inhibitors or ARBs can help slow the rate of kidney disease when there is protein in the urine. These may be able to help even if you don't have high blood pressure. Know your medications. Are you taking an ACE inhibitor or an ARB? If not, ask your doctor if one might be a good choice for you. To learn more about ACE inhibitors and ARBs, visit the Blood Pressure Medicines Topic.

