

# Know Your Risk

for Blood Vessel Damage.

## Microalbumin

### What is microalbumin?

Albumin is a protein that is normally found in your blood, but not normally found in your urine. Very small (micro) amounts of albumin sometimes leak into your urine and can warn your doctor that you may have a health problem.

### Why check my microalbumin level?

Your kidneys play an important role in keeping you alive and well. Their main job is to get rid of waste products, like extra protein, sugars, and salts, and extra water from your body by making urine. The thin layer of cells, that line the blood vessels in your kidneys, filter your blood just as a coffee filter allows the coffee-flavored water to go through it, but not the coffee grounds.

If albumin is in your urine, even in small amounts, it may mean that the cells that line blood vessels in your kidneys are damaged. You can think of this type of kidney damage as a torn coffee filter. If these cells in your kidney are damaged, it may be a sign that the cells that line blood vessels in other parts of your body are also damaged or diseased, such as those that feed your heart.

Your doctor may want to check your microalbumin level if you have risk factors for heart attack such as smoking, high blood pressure, high blood sugar, or high cholesterol levels. Ask your doctor if this test is right for you.

### What can I do to improve my microalbumin levels?

There are a number of things you can do to help keep your blood vessels healthy and lower your risk of heart disease, as well as your microalbumin levels.

- **Eat a healthy diet.** A heart-healthy, Mediterranean diet - that is low in saturated fat and cholesterol, full of high-fiber foods (such as fresh fruits, vegetables, and whole grains), and has very little added salt and sugars - can help you control cholesterol levels, blood pressure, and blood sugar.

- **If you smoke, you should quit.** Smoking damages the walls of blood vessels and increases both heart attack and stroke risk, partly because smoking can also make clots form faster and bigger.
- **Take your medications,** if told by your doctor, to lower your blood pressure, blood sugar, and/or blood cholesterol levels.

With heart disease being the #1 killer of Americans, it's important to develop a plan with your doctor to lower your risk of a heart attack or stroke *before* one happens.

### Additional Need-to-Knows:

The microalbumin test can be done at the same time you have your standard cholesterol test. When getting ready for the microalbumin test:

- Keep taking your medications as directed.
- Fasting is not required.
- Drink a normal amount of water. Too little or too much water can affect the results of your urine test.

### Relative Risk

### What do my results mean?

<7.5 Women  
<3.9 Men  
**Low**

Your result is in the desirable range, suggesting that you have a lower risk of damage to your blood vessel wall.

≥7.5 Women  
≥3.9 Men  
**High**

You have moderate/high levels of albumin in your urine, suggesting that the wall of your blood vessels may be damaged.

