



Eastern
Health

MEMORANDUM

To: All Physicians, Nurse Practitioners, and others with laboratory test ordering privileges
Date: March 14th, 2017
Re: Change in Folate Status Testing
From: Dr. Ed Randell

Dear Colleagues,

Effective May 1, 2017, red blood cell (RBC) folate measurement will no longer be offered, and serum folate testing will be offered as the substitute, for evaluating cases of suspected megaloblastic anemia, where vitamin B12 status is normal.

Serum folate levels can significantly increase following food intake, for this reason fasting samples are required. Serum folate levels may also be affected by hemolysis. The reasons for this change is three-fold:

- 1) Both tests respond to folic acid supplementation and fortification.
- 2) Serum folate is less prone to change due to analytical factors like variation in hematocrit and oxygen saturation.
- 3) Serum folate testing provides equivalent information but at lower cost.

Please note that as a consequence of this change, orders for RBC Folate received after May 1, 2017 will be CANCELLED if the patient had not been fasting at the time of presentation for blood collection. In such cases, an electronic cancellation notice will be sent to the ordering physician advising that if testing is clinically justified, a new test order is required and the patient must be advised to present for blood collection following an overnight fast.

In cases where the patient is fasting, serum folate will be ordered in lieu of RBC folate.

There is no evidence supporting usefulness or cost-effectiveness of folate status testing over simple folic acid supplementation without testing in high risk cases. Folate status testing is rarely clinically warranted.

Kindest Regards,

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