



Glutathione reductase

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Reduced glutathione (GSH) is the major intracellular antioxidant, acting as a trap for the numerous oxidants produced by oxidative and nitrosative stress. The *in vivo* bioavailability of GSH is a function of the activity of glutathione reductase (GSHr), a flavoprotein that catalyses the NADPH-dependent reduction of glutathione disulphide to GSH (i.e. the opposite reaction to glutathione peroxidase). The activity of GSHr is dependent on vitamin B2 (riboflavin) [1] although it is also reported to be dependent on selenium status [2]. Deficiency of GSHr is characterised by haemolysis associated with increased sensitivity of the erythrocyte membrane to oxidative stress [3]. The activity of GSHr is inhibited by paraquat [3] and by anti-tumour agents [4].

Genetic deficiency of GSHr has been described and is associated with a tendency to haemolysis after consumption of fava beans. Moderately low levels of GSHr are also associated with sickle cell disease, hereditary spherocytosis and thalassemia [4].

This activity of GSHr is thus required for the maintenance of glutathione (GSH) levels *in vivo* and a favourable GSH/GSSG ratio inside the cell. Measurement of GSHr activity is an important component in the assessment of the antioxidant status of the cell and of the functionality of the glutathione cycle.

GSHr activity can be detected and measured in the serum, as well as in erythrocytes.

Specimen

Whole blood, collected with heparin as an anticoagulant. The correct tubes are available from Biolab on request. If posted, blood samples must reach us within 24 hours.

Patient preparation

No special preparation is required prior to venipuncture.

Interpretation

The reference intervals for glutathione reductase are:

Plasma / serum	33 – 73 U/L
Erythrocytes	4.7 – 13.2 U / g Hb

Turn around time

1 weeks (5 working days).

P.T.O.

'Celebrating 25 years of Service to Doctors and Patients'

References

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4. Beutler E, Dale GL (1989) Erythrocyte glutathione: function and metabolism. In: Dolphin D, Poulsen R, Avramovic O (eds). *Glutathione: chemical, biochemical and medical aspects* 1989:291-318, John Wiley, New York NY (pubs).
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