

Bile acids	
Description	Bile acids are usually measured in the diagnosis of pruritis (itching) in pregnancy.
Indication	Differential diagnosis of pruritis in pregnancy.
Additional Info	<p>Total bile acids are metabolised in the liver and serve as a marker for normal liver function. Bile acids are increased in hepatobiliary diseases including acute hepatitis, chronic hepatitis, liver sclerosis, liver cancer and in obstetric cholestasis. However the clinical usefulness of this test over existing liver function tests has not been proven and routine measurement in the diagnosis and monitoring of hepatobiliary disease is not recommended.</p> <p>The major indication for bile acid measurement is the differential diagnosis of pruritis in pregnancy.</p>
Concurrent Tests	LFT's
Dietary Requirements	N/A
Interpretation	For the investigation of possible obstetric cholestasis in a pregnant woman presenting with pruritis (itching), a cut off of $14\mu\text{mol/L}$ is currently recommended as excluding a diagnosis of obstetric cholestasis. Serum bile acid concentrations of $14\mu\text{mol/L}$ or greater are suggestive of obstetric cholestasis and require increased surveillance and possible intervention to avoid significant perinatal mortality and maternal morbidity and continued monitoring is warranted.
Collection Conditions	Serum or serum gel sample is required for analysis. Bile acids must not be measured in patients treated with ursodeoxycholic acid.
Frequency of testing	<p>Bile acids in obstetric cholestasis: Weekly monitoring. Twice weekly monitoring advised in later weeks if clinical state changing¹</p>

¹ National Minimum Re-testing Interval Project: A final report detailing consensus recommendations for minimum re-testing intervals for use in Clinical Biochemistry (2013). <http://www.acb.org.uk/docs/default-source/guidelines/acb-mri-recommendations-a4-computer.pdf?sfvrsn=2>