

## Overview

### Useful For

Evaluation of patients who present with signs or symptoms suggestive of porphyria cutanea tarda, hereditary coproporphyria, variegate porphyria, congenital erythropoietic porphyria, erythropoietic protoporphyria, or X-linked dominant protoporphyria

### Testing Algorithm

The following algorithms are available in Special Instructions:

- [-Porphyria \(Acute\) Testing Algorithm](#)
- [-Porphyria \(Cutaneous\) Testing Algorithm](#)

### Special Instructions

- [The Heme Biosynthetic Pathway](#)
- [Porphyria \(Acute\) Testing Algorithm](#)
- [Porphyria \(Cutaneous\) Testing Algorithm](#)

### Method Name

High-Performance Liquid Chromatography (HPLC)  
Porphyrins are quantified by fluorescence.

### NY State Available

Yes

## Specimen

### Specimen Type

Fecal

### Specimen Required

**Container/Tube:** Stool container (T291)

**Specimen Volume:** Entire collection (48, 72, or 96 hour). 24-Hour collection is adequate if the collection volume is approximately 100 g.

#### Collection Instructions:

- Patient should be instructed to refrain from red meat and aspirin-containing medications for 3 days prior to, as well as during, specimen collection. Compliance should be indicated.
- No barium, laxatives, or enemas may be used within 24 hours of starting the collection.

#### Additional Information:

- Length of collection period is required.**
- Specimens smaller than 100 g may not provide interpretable results.
- Include a list of medications the patient is currently taking.

**Forms**

[If not ordering electronically, complete, print, and send a Biochemical Genetics Test Request \(T798\)](#) with the specimen.

**Specimen Minimum Volume**

10 g

**Reject Due To**

All specimens will be evaluated at Mayo Clinic Laboratories for test suitability.

**Specimen Stability Information**

Specimen Type	Temperature	Time	Special Container
Fecal	Frozen (preferred)	14 days	
	Refrigerated	14 days	

**Clinical & Interpretive****Clinical Information**

The porphyrias are a group of inherited disorders resulting from enzyme defects in the heme biosynthetic pathway. Depending on the specific enzyme involved, various porphyrins and their precursors accumulate in different specimen types. The patterns of porphyrin accumulation in erythrocytes and plasma, and excretion of the heme precursors in urine and feces allow for the detection and differentiation of the porphyrias.

The porphyrias are typically classified as erythropoietic or hepatic based upon the primary site of the enzyme defect. In addition, hepatic porphyrias can be further classified as chronic or acute, based on their clinical presentation.

The primary acute hepatic porphyrias: acute intermittent porphyria (AIP), hereditary coproporphyrin (HCP), and variegate porphyria (VP), are associated with neurovisceral symptoms, which typically onset during puberty or later. Common symptoms include severe abdominal pain, peripheral neuropathy, and psychiatric symptoms. Crises may be precipitated by a broad range of medications (including barbiturates and sulfa drugs), alcohol, infection, starvation, heavy metals, and hormonal changes. Photosensitivity is not associated with AIP, but may be present in HCP and VP.

Cutaneous photosensitivity is associated with the chronic hepatic porphyrias: porphyria cutanea tarda (PCT) and the erythropoietic porphyrias; erythropoietic protoporphyria (EPP), X-linked dominant protoporphyria (XLDPP), and congenital erythropoietic porphyria (CEP). Although genetic in nature, environmental factors may exacerbate symptoms, significantly impacting the severity and course of disease.

CEP is an erythropoietic porphyria caused by uroporphyrinogen III synthase deficiency. Symptoms typically present in early infancy with red-brown staining of diapers, severe cutaneous photosensitivity with fluid-filled bullae and vesicles. Other common symptoms may include thickening of the skin, hypo- and hyperpigmentation, hypertrichosis, cutaneous scarring, and deformities of the fingers, eyelids, lips, nose, and ears. A few milder adult-onset cases have been documented as well as cases that are secondary to myeloid malignancies.

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PCT is the most common form of porphyria and is most commonly sporadic (acquired), but in about 25% of cases it is inherited in an autosomal dominant manner. The most prominent clinical characteristics are cutaneous photosensitivity and scarring on sun-exposed surfaces. Patients experience chronic blistering lesions resulting from mild trauma to sun-exposed areas. These fluid-filled vesicles rupture easily, become crusted, and heal slowly. Secondary infections can cause areas of hypo- or hyperpigmentation or sclerodermatous changes and may result in the development of alopecia at sites of repeated skin damage. Liver disease is common in patients with PCT as evidenced by abnormal liver function tests and 30% to 40% of patients developing cirrhosis. In addition, there is an increased risk of hepatocellular carcinoma.

Hepatoerythropoietic porphyria (HEP) occurs when an individual inherits PCT from both parents. Patients exhibit a similar clinical presentation to what is seen in CEP.

Clinical presentation of EPP and XLDPP is identical with onset of symptoms typically occurring in childhood. Cutaneous photosensitivity in sun-exposed areas of the skin generally worsens in the spring and summer months. Common symptoms may include itching, edema, erythema, stinging or burning sensations, and occasionally scarring of the skin in sun-exposed areas.

Increased fecal porphyrin excretions are observed most commonly in symptomatic patients with CEP, PCT, HCP, and VP. In quiescent phases, as well as prior to puberty, fecal porphyrin excretion may be within normal limits. Patients with AIP may have elevated fecal porphyrin levels during severe attacks. EPP and XLDPP patients may have elevated protoporphyrin levels, however, these disorders cannot be diagnosed by fecal analysis alone.

The workup of patients with a suspected porphyria is most effective when following a stepwise approach. See [Porphyria \(Acute\) Testing Algorithm](#) and [Porphyria \(Cutaneous\) Testing Algorithm](#) in Special Instructions or call 800-533-1710 to discuss testing strategies.

**Reference Values**

UROPORPHYRIN I

&lt;120 mcg/24 hours

UROPORPHYRIN III

&lt;50 mcg/24 hours

HEPTACARBOXYL PORPHYRIN I

&lt;40 mcg/24 hours

HEPTACARBOXYL PORPHYRIN III

&lt;40 mcg/24 hours

ISOHEPTACARBOXYL PORPHYRINS

&lt;30 mcg/24 hours

HEXACARBOXYL PORPHYRIN I

&lt;10 mcg/24 hours

HEXACARBOXYL PORPHYRIN III

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<10 mcg/24 hours

ISOHEXACARBOXYL PORPHYRINS

<10 mcg/24 hours

PENTACARBOXYL PORPHYRIN I

<20 mcg/24 hours

PENTACARBOXYL PORPHYRIN III

<20 mcg/24 hours

ISOPENTACARBOXYL PORPHYRINS

<80 mcg/24 hours

COPROPORPHYRIN I

<500 mcg/24 hours

COPROPORPHYRIN III

<400 mcg/24 hours

ISOCOPROPORPHYRIN

<200 mcg/24 hours

PROTOPORPHYRINS

<1,500 mcg/24 hours

COPROPORPHYRIN III/COPROPORPHYRIN I RATIO

<1.20

See [The Heme Biosynthetic Pathway](#) in Special Instructions.

### Interpretation

Abnormal results are reported with a detailed interpretation that may include an overview of the results and their significance, a correlation to available clinical information provided with the specimen, differential diagnosis, recommendations for additional testing when indicated and available, and a phone number to reach one of the laboratory directors in case the referring physician has additional questions.

### Cautions

Heme from red meat can contribute to fecal protoporphyrin concentrations and cause a misleading indication of erythropoietic protoporphyria, X-linked dominant protoporphyria, or variegate porphyria.

Aspirin ingestion may cause minimal gastrointestinal bleeding, leading to false elevations of protoporphyrin.

Specimen submitted should contain at least 100 g of feces. Specimens smaller than 100 g may not provide interpretable results. Specimens weighing less than 10 grams will be rejected.

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**Clinical Reference**

1. Tortorelli S, Kloke KM, Raymond KM: Chapter 15: Disorders of porphyrin metabolism. *In* Biochemical and Molecular Basis of Pediatric Disease. Fourth edition. Edited by DJ Dietzen, MJ Bennett, ECC Wong. AACCC Press, 2010, pp 307-324
2. Nuttall KL, Klee GG: Analytes of hemoglobin metabolism - porphyrins, iron, and bilirubin. *In* Tietz Textbook of Clinical Chemistry. Fifth edition. Edited by CA Burtis, ER Ashwood. Philadelphia, WB Saunders Company, 2001, pp 584-607
3. Anderson KE, Sassa S, Bishop DF, Desnick RJ: X-Linked sideroblastic anemia and the porphyrias. *In* Disorders of Heme Biosynthesis. Edited by D Valle, AL Beaudet, B Vogelstein, et al. New York: McGraw-Hill; 2014. Accessed June 27, 2016. Available at <https://ommbid.mhmedical.com/content.aspx?sectionid=225540906&bookid=2709>

**Performance****Method Description**

The porphyrins are separated according to numbers of carboxyl units and isomer status. Analytic specificity is based on the combination of chromatographic behavior and the uniqueness of the porphyrins among substances in human specimens in terms of fluorescence spectra. Components quantified are 10 specific porphyrins of isomer series I and III, 4 groups of "isoporphyrins" (isomers other than of series I and III), and protoporphyrin.(Unpublished Mayo method)

**PDF Report**

No

**Day(s) Performed**

Tuesday, Thursday

**Report Available**

4 to 7 days

**Specimen Retention Time**

1 week

**Performing Laboratory Location**

Rochester

**Fees & Codes****Fees**

- Authorized users can sign in to [Test Prices](#) for detailed fee information.
- Clients without access to Test Prices can contact [Customer Service](#) 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- Prospective clients should contact their Regional Manager. For assistance, contact [Customer Service](#).

**Test Classification**

This test was developed, and its performance characteristics determined by Mayo Clinic in a manner consistent with CLIA requirements. This test has not been cleared or approved by the US Food and Drug Administration.

**CPT Code Information**

84126

**LOINC® Information**

Test ID	Test Order Name	Order LOINC® Value
FQPPS	Porphyrins, F	94548-5

Result ID	Test Result Name	Result LOINC® Value
TM70	Collection Duration	13363-7
15517	Uroporphyrin I	26691-6
15518	Uroporphyrin III	33585-1
15519	Heptacarboxyl I	49900-4
15520	Heptacarboxyl III	49901-2
15521	Isoheptacarboxyl	94549-3
15522	Hexacarboxyl I	94550-1
15523	Hexacarboxyl III	94551-9
15524	Isohexacarboxyl	94552-7
15525	Pentacarboxyl I	33623-0
15526	Pentacarboxyl III	33624-8
15527	Isopentacarboxyl	94553-5
15528	Coproporphyrin I	23845-1
15529	Coproporphyrin III	23846-9
15530	Isocoproporphyrin	33625-5
15534	Protoporphyrin	2891-0
15545	CoprolIII/Coprol ratio	33618-0
W6	Total weight	30078-0
81652	Interpretation (FQPPS)	59462-2
35013	Reviewed By	18771-6