Overview

Useful For
Assessing T-cell function in patients on immunosuppressive therapy, including solid-organ transplant patients
Evaluating patients suspected of having impairment in cellular immunity
Evaluation of T-cell function in patients with primary immunodeficiencies, either cellular (DiGeorge syndrome, T-negative severe combined immunodeficiency: SCID, etc) or combined T- and B-cell immunodeficiencies (T- and B-negative SCID, Wiskott Aldrich syndrome, ataxia telangiectasia, common variable immunodeficiency, among others) where T-cell function may be impaired
Evaluation of T-cell function in patients with secondary immunodeficiency, either disease related or iatrogenic
Evaluation of recovery of T-cell function and competence following bone marrow transplantation or hematopoietic stem cell transplantation

Reflex Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test ID</th>
<th>Reporting Name</th>
<th>Available Separately</th>
<th>Always Performed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AGSTM</td>
<td>Additional Flow Stimulant, LPAGF</td>
<td>No, (Bill Only)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Testing Algorithm
If insufficient peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMCs) are isolated from the patient's sample due to low WBC counts or specimen volume received, selected dilutions or stimulants may not be tested at the discretion of the laboratory to ensure the most reliable results. Testing with 1 stimulant will always be performed. When adequate specimen is available for both stimulants to be tested, an additional test ID will be reflexed and billed separately.

Method Name
FlowCytometry
NY State Available
Yes

Specimen
Specimen Type
WB Sodium Heparin
Shipping Instructions
Specimens are required to be received in the laboratory weekdays and by 4 p.m. on Friday. Draw and package specimen as close to shipping time as possible. Ship specimen overnight in an Ambient Shipping Box-Critical Specimens Only (T668) following the instructions in the box.

It is recommended that specimens arrive within 24 hours of draw.
Samples arriving on the weekend and observed holidays may be canceled.

**Necessary Information**

1. Date and time of draw and ordering physician name and phone number are required.

2. Specify "Antigen" to differentiate from "Mitogen" testing. This information is required.

**Specimen Required**

This test should not be ordered for patients younger than 3 months of age unless there is a clinical history of candidiasis. See the Cautions section for additional information.

For serial monitoring, we recommend that specimen draws be performed at the same time of day. See Cautions section.

**Supplies:** Ambient Shipping Box-Critical Specimens Only (T668)

**Container/Tube:** Green top (sodium heparin)

**Specimen Volume:**

See Cautions section.

<3 months: 1 mL

3-24 months: 3 mL

25 months-18 years: 5 mL

>18 years: 20 mL

**Collection Instructions:** Send specimen in original tube. Do not aliquot.

**Blood Volume Recommendations Based on Absolute Lymphocyte Count (ALC)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ALC</th>
<th>Blood Volume for Minimum CA and TT Only</th>
<th>Blood Volume for Full Assay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;0.5</td>
<td>&gt;18.5 cc</td>
<td>&gt;40 cc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.5-1.0</td>
<td>18.5 cc</td>
<td>40 cc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1-1.5</td>
<td>8.5 cc</td>
<td>20 cc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6-2.0</td>
<td>6.0 cc</td>
<td>12 cc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1-3.0</td>
<td>4.5 cc</td>
<td>10 cc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1-4.0</td>
<td>3.0 cc</td>
<td>6 cc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1-5.0</td>
<td>2.5 cc</td>
<td>5 cc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;5.0</td>
<td>2.0 cc</td>
<td>4 cc</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Test Definition: LPAGF**

**Lymphocyte Proliferation, Antigens**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mitogen and Antigen</th>
<th>Blood Volume for Minimum of Each Assay</th>
<th>Blood Volume for Full Assay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALC</td>
<td>&lt;0.5: &gt;28 cc</td>
<td>&gt;60 cc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.5-1.0: 28 cc</td>
<td>60 cc</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.1-1.5: 12 cc</td>
<td>30 cc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.6-2.0: 8.5 cc</td>
<td>20 cc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.1-3.0: 6.5 cc</td>
<td>15 cc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.1-4.0: 4.5 cc</td>
<td>10 cc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.1-5.0: 3.5 cc</td>
<td>8 cc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt;5.0: 2.5 cc</td>
<td>6 cc</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Specimen Minimum Volume**

<6 years: 1 mL; 6-18 years: 2 mL; Adults (>18 years): 6 mL

**Reject Due To**

- Gross hemolysis: Reject
- Gross lipemia: Reject

**Specimen Stability Information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specimen Type</th>
<th>Temperature</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Special Container</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WB Sodium Heparin</td>
<td>Ambient</td>
<td>48 hours</td>
<td>GREEN TOP/HEP</td>
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</table>

**Clinical and Interpretive**

**Clinical Information**

Determining impaired T-cell function by culturing human peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMC) in vitro with recall antigens, including *Candida albicans* (CA) and tetanus toxoid (TT), has been part of the diagnostic immunology repertoire for many years. The widely used method for assessing lymphocyte proliferation to antigens has hitherto been the measurement of 3H-thymidine incorporated into the DNA of proliferating cells. The disadvantages with the 3H-thymidine method of lymphocyte proliferation are:

1. The technique is cumbersome due to the use of radioactivity
2. It does not allow discrimination of responding cell populations in response to stimulation
3. It does not provide any information on contribution of activation-induced cell death to the interpretation of the final result

Further, decreased lymphocyte proliferation could be due to several factors, including overall diminution of T-cell proliferation or decrease in proliferation of only a subset of T cells, or an apparent decrease in total lymphocyte proliferation due to T-cell lymphopenia and under representation of T cells in the PBMC pool. None of these can be
discriminated by the thymidine uptake assay, but can be assessed by flow cytometry, which uses antibodies to identify specific responder cell populations. Cell viability can also be measured within the same assay without requiring additional cell manipulation or sample.

Antigens, like CA and TT, have been widely used to measure antigen-specific recall (anamnestic) T-cell responses when assessing cellular immunity. In fact, it may be more revealing about cellular immune compromise than assessing the response of lymphocytes to mitogens because the latter can induce T-cell proliferative responses even if those T cells are incapable of responding adequately to antigenic (physiologic) stimuli. Therefore, abnormal T-cell responses to antigens are considered a diagnostically more sensitive, but less specific, test of aberrant T-cell function.(2)

Antigens used in recall assays measure the ability of T cells bearing specific T-cell receptors (TCR) to respond to such antigens when processed and presented by antigen-presenting cells. The antigens used for assessment of the cellular immune response are selected to represent antigens, seen by a majority of the population, either through natural exposure (CA) or as a result of vaccination (TT).

This assay uses a method that directly measures the S-phase proliferation of lymphocytes through the use of click chemistry. Cell viability, apoptosis, and death can also be measured by flow cytometry using 7-AAD and Annexin V. The Click-iT-EdU assay has already been shown to be an acceptable alternative to the 3H-thymidine assay for measuring lymphocyte/T-cell proliferation.(3)

The degree of impairment of antigen-specific T-cell responses can vary depending on the nature of the cellular immune compromise. For example, some, but not all, patients with partial DiGeorge syndrome, a primary cellular immunodeficiency, have been reported to have either decreased or absent T-cell responses to CA and TT.(4) Similarly, relative immune compromise, especially to TT, has been reported in children with vitamin A deficiency, but the measurements have been largely of the humoral immune response. Since this requires participation of the cellular immune compartment, it can be postulated that there could be a potential impairment of antigen-specific T-cell responses as well.(5)

Reference Values

Viability of lymphocytes at day 0: > or =75.0%

Maximum proliferation of Candida albicans as % CD45: > or =5.7%

Maximum proliferation of Candida albicans as % CD3: > or =3.0%

Maximum proliferation of tetanus toxoid as % CD45: > or =5.2%

Maximum proliferation of tetanus toxoid as % CD3: > or =3.3%

Interpretation

Abnormal test results to antigen stimulation are indicative of impaired T-cell function, if T-cell counts are normal or only modestly decreased. If there is profound T-cell lymphopenia, it must be kept in mind that there could be a “dilution” effect with underrepresentation of T cells within the peripheral blood mononuclear cell (PBMC) population that could result in lower T-cell proliferative responses. However, this is not a significant concern in the flow cytometry assay, since acquisition of additional cellular events during analysis can compensate for artificial reduction in proliferation due to lower T-cell counts. In the case of antigen-specific T-cell responses to tetanus toxoid (TT), there can be absent responses due to natural waning of cellular immunity, if the interval between vaccinations has exceeded the recommended period, especially in adults. In such circumstances, it would be appropriate to measure TT-specific T-cell responses 4 to 6 weeks after a booster vaccination.

There is no absolute correlation between T-cell proliferation in vitro and a clinically significant immunodeficiency,
whether primary or secondary, since T-cell proliferation in response to activation is necessary, but not sufficient, for an effective immune response. Therefore, the proliferative response to antigens can be regarded as a more sensitive, but less specific, test for the diagnosis of infection susceptibility.

It should also be kept in mind that there is no single laboratory test that can identify or define impaired cellular immunity, with the exception of an opportunistic infection.

Controls in this laboratory and most clinical laboratories are healthy adults. Since this test is used for screening and evaluating cellular immune dysfunction in infants and children, it is reasonable to question the comparability of proliferative responses between healthy infants, children, and adults. It is reasonable to expect robust T-cell-specific responses to TT in children without cellular immune compromise, as a result of repeated childhood vaccinations. The response to Candida albicans can be more variable depending on the extent of exposure and age of exposure. A comment will be provided in the report documenting the comparison of pediatric results with an adult reference range and correlation with clinical context for appropriate interpretation.

It should be noted that without obtaining formal pediatric reference values, it remains a possibility that the response in infants and children can be underestimated. However, the practical challenges of generating a pediatric range for this assay necessitate comparison of pediatric data with adult reference values or controls.

**Cautions**

There is no clinical utility to assessing antigen responses in infants younger than 3 months old due to limited antigen exposure and vaccination. The only exception would be infants who develop candidiasis prior to 3 months of age.

This test is not intended for assessment of maternal engraftment.

When interpreting results it should be kept in mind that the range of lymphocyte proliferative responses observed in healthy, immunologically competent individuals is large. The reference ranges provided will be helpful in ascertaining the magnitude of the normal response.

Lymphocyte proliferation to mitogens is known to be affected by concomitant use of steroids, immunosuppressive agents, including cyclosporine, tacrolimus (FK506), Cellcept (mycophenolate mofetil), immunomodulatory agents, alcohol, and physiological and social stress.

Lymphocyte proliferation responses to antigens (and mitogens) are significantly affected by time elapsed since blood collection. Results have been shown to be variable for specimens assessed more than 24 and less than 48 hours postblood collection. Therefore, lymphocyte proliferation results must be interpreted with due caution and results should be correlated with clinical context. Specimens more than 24-hours old may give spurious results.

Diminished results may be obtained in cultures that contain excess neutrophils or nonviable cells.(6)

Timing, and consistency in timing, of blood collection is critical when serially monitoring patients lymphocyte subsets (specifically T cells in this context) and their diurnal variation can potentially affect the magnitude of the proliferative response, especially in patients who already have severe T-cell lymphopenia. The absolute counts of lymphocyte subsets are known to be influenced by a variety of biological factors including hormones, the environment, and temperature. The studies on diurnal (circadian) variation in lymphocyte counts have demonstrated progressive increase in CD4 T-cell count throughout the day, while CD8 T cells and CD19+ B cells increase between 8:30 a.m. and noon, with no change between noon and afternoon. Natural killer (NK)-cell counts, on the other hand, are constant throughout the day. Circadian variations in circulating T-cell counts have been shown to be negatively correlated with plasma cortisol concentration. In fact, cortisol and catecholamine concentrations control distribution and, therefore, numbers of naive versus effector CD4 and CD8 T cells. It is generally accepted that lower CD4 T-cell counts are seen in the morning compared with the evening, and during summer compared to winter.
**Clinical Reference**


**Performance**

**Method Description**

Peripheral blood mononuclear cells in RPMI 1640 medium supplemented with L-glutamine and 20% human AB serum are added to wells that contain either medium plus 20% AB serum alone (unstimulated) or varying concentrations of *Candida albicans* and tetanus toxoid antigens. Cells are analyzed by flow cytometry for day 0 viability as outlined below. After 6 days of incubation, EdU (thymidine analog) is added to all wells, where it becomes incorporated into the synthesizing DNA during a final 18- to 24-hour incubation period. A daily experimental normal control is included with each batch of patient samples to serve as an internal control.

On day 7 following the second incubation, the cells are stained for proliferation via a copper-catalyzed click chemistry reaction where the EdU, an alkyn, is covalently bonded to a fluorescent azide. Cells are also stained for the following markers: CD45+ lymphocytes, CD3+ T cells, and CD69+ activated T cells. Results are reported for the percent viable cells on day 0, as well as percent proliferating cells within each group of lymphocytes and T cells. (Package insert: 4; Invitrogen Click-iT-EdU; Unpublished Mayo method)

**PDF Report**

No

**Day(s) and Time(s) Test Performed**

Monday through Friday

**Do not send specimen after Thursday.**

**Analytic Time**

Document generated January 22, 2020 at 1:12am CST
Test Definition: LPAGF
Lymphocyte Proliferation, Antigens

11 days
Maximum Laboratory Time

14 days
Specimen Retention Time
Entire specimen is used in preparation of the assay

Performing Laboratory Location
Rochester

Fees and 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 using an analyte specific reagent. Its performance characteristics were determined by Mayo Clinic in a manner consistent with CLIA requirements. This test has not been cleared or approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

CPT Code Information
86353

86353 (if appropriate)

LOINC® Information

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<th>Order LOINC Value</th>
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<td>Lymphocyte Proliferation, Antigens</td>
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<td>Interpretation</td>
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<tr>
<td>32326</td>
<td>Viab of Lymphs at Day 0</td>
<td>33193-4</td>
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<tr>
<td>32327</td>
<td>Max Prolif of CA as % CD45</td>
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<td>Max Prolif of CA as % CD3</td>
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