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Normal Labs, Still Not Feeling Normal?

A pharmacist's checklist of the labs that can show insulin resistance years before your blood sugar turns "abnormal."

Insulin resistance usually starts quietly. Your body makes more and more insulin to keep blood sugar normal, so a standard glucose test can look fine for years. Tired after meals, cravings, weight that won't budge around the middle, "normal" labs: that was my story too. It started with asking for the right tests.

INSULIN

Collected: 12/18/2025 06:08 PM UTC Received: 12/18/2025 06:08 PM UTC

INSULIN	4.7	uIU/mL	7.4	03/06/2025	EN
Reference Range < or = 18.4					

My real results: 7.4 μ IU/mL in March 2025, 4.7 in December 2025. Both sat well inside this lab's "normal" range (18.4 or under), which is why your trend matters more than a single flag.

By **Shade Alabi, Pharmacist** · Educational only. Not medical advice.





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- 1 Tick the labs you already have results for.
- 2 Circle the ones to ask about at your next visit.
- 3 Write your numbers in the tracker on page 4.

The Core 5 Labs

Together, these show how hard your body is working to keep blood sugar in range. Fasting glucose and A1C alone can stay "normal" while insulin is already climbing.

☐ Fasting insulin

How much insulin your body needs to hold blood sugar steady overnight. Often the earliest sign.

REFERENCE VALUES

No single agreed cut-off; lab ranges are wide (often up to ~25 μ U/mL).

PHARMACIST NOTE

Not on routine panels, so you usually have to ask. Track your own trend on the same lab.

☐ Fasting glucose

Blood sugar after 8+ hours without food.

REFERENCE VALUES

Normal under 100 mg/dL; prediabetes 100–125; diabetes 126+.¹

PHARMACIST NOTE

Can stay normal for years while insulin rises.

☐ HbA1c

Average blood sugar over about 3 months.

REFERENCE VALUES

Normal under 5.7%; prediabetes 5.7–6.4%; diabetes 6.5%+.¹

PHARMACIST NOTE

Because it's a 3-month average, one good or bad day won't change it much. Like fasting glucose, it can stay normal while insulin is already rising.

☐ HOMA-IR a calculation, not a separate test

Combines fasting insulin and glucose into one score. 2.0–3.0 is commonly used in the US, and national NHANES data use 2.5 and above; cut-offs vary by ethnicity and are lower (1.4–2.5) in Asian populations.²

Formula: fasting insulin (μ U/mL) $\times$ fasting glucose (mg/dL) $\div$ 405² · **Example:** 7.4 $\times$ 90 $\div$ 405 = 1.6

☐ Triglycerides $\div$ HDL from a standard lipid panel

Triglycerides over 150 mg/dL with HDL under 50 (women) or 40 (men) is a common insulin-resistance pattern.³ A 2024 review of 32 studies found average ratio cut-offs of about 2.5 (women) and 2.8 (men).⁴ Less accurate in African Americans, especially women; lower cut-offs (above 1.5 for women, 2 for men) have been suggested.⁴



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Helpful Extras

Ask about these if you have symptoms, a family history of diabetes, or PCOS.

☐ Waist	Measured at the belly button. Over 35 in (women) or 40 in (men); thresholds may differ by ethnicity. ³
☐ Blood pressure	High insulin raises blood pressure over time. Watch for consistently 130/85 mm Hg or higher. ³
☐ ALT	Liver enzyme. Healthy ALT is 19–25 U/L for women and 29–33 for men, lower than many lab ranges. ⁵
☐ Uric acid	Often runs high alongside insulin resistance. Compare with your past results.
☐ hs-CRP	Low-grade inflammation marker. One high result after a cold or injury can be temporary.
☐ 2-hour OGTT	Glucose under 140 mg/dL at 2 hours is normal; 140–199 is prediabetes. ¹ Ask if adding insulin is useful.



How to Ask Your Doctor

WHAT TO SAY

"My labs have come back normal, but I'm still dealing with [fatigue after meals / cravings / weight gain around my middle]. I have [a family history of diabetes / PCOS / gestational diabetes]. Could we check my fasting insulin with my fasting glucose, so we can calculate HOMA-IR? I'd also like a lipid panel and A1C."

Before your blood draw

- ☐ Book a morning appointment and fast 8–12 hours (water is fine).
- ☐ Ask that fasting insulin and glucose are drawn at the same time.
- ☐ Keep taking your usual medicines unless your doctor or pharmacist says otherwise.
- ☐ Skip a hard workout and alcohol the day before; both can shift results.
- ☐ Ask for a copy of your results with the reference ranges, not just "normal."



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My Numbers Tracker

Write in each result with its date. Small changes over 3–6 months tell you more than any single number.

Lab	Date: _____	Date: _____	Date: _____
Fasting insulin (µIU/mL)			
Fasting glucose (mg/dL)			
HOMA-IR			
HbA1c (%)			
Triglycerides (mg/dL)			
HDL (mg/dL)			
Triglycerides ÷ HDL			
Waist (in)			
Blood pressure (mm Hg)			

Questions for your follow-up

- ☐ "Is my fasting insulin in the lower part of the range, or near the top?"
- ☐ "How has this changed since my last result?"
- ☐ "Could anything affect my A1C reading, like anemia or a hemoglobin variant?"
- ☐ "When should we recheck?"

Want help making sense of your numbers?
Follow @insulinresistancerox for real CGM data, real food and simple habits.

Educational only. Not medical advice. This checklist does not diagnose or treat any condition. Talk with your own doctor before changing your diet, medicines or supplements. **Simple habits. Real progress. Shade Alabi, Pharmacist**

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