

Department of Clinical Biochemistry
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Denmark Hill
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20th July 2022

To whom it may concern,

RE: Update to serum potassium reference range

We are writing to inform you of a change to the serum **potassium** service within Viapath at King's College Hospital, Denmark Hill and Princess Royal University Hospital sites. The existing reference range for serum potassium is being changed from 3.5-5.0 mmol/L to **3.5-5.3 mmol/L**. This change will take effect on 25/07/2022.

The new reference range aligns the potassium reference range at both sites with those recommended by the Pathology Harmony Group in 2011. UK laboratories are able to use a single nationally agreed reference range for serum potassium concentrations because they all use similar testing methodologies, and results do not vary geographically. A 2021 survey by Getting it Right First Time showed that 74% of the English laboratories that responded used the Pathology Harmony Group range. Adopting it will help prevent patients from having their results flagged as normal by some of their care providers, and abnormal by others.


The new reference range is also more appropriate for the potassium results observed in the local healthy population. Potassium results from Lambeth and Southwark GPs and Bromley GPs from November 2020 to September 2021 showed that 6.1% of results fell above the previous upper limit of 5.0 mmol/L, a much greater number than the 2.5% that would be expected for an appropriate reference range. 1.9% fell above the new upper limit of 5.3 mmol/L.

Please cascade this information to all relevant staff as required. For any queries regarding this change please contact either:

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Yours sincerely,



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