

DATE:	14 September 2026
TO:	All Healthcare Providers
FROM:	Clinical Biochemistry, Alberta Precision Laboratories
RE:	Update to Plasma Metanephrine Reporting and Notification of 3-Methoxytyramine Availability

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Key Message

- Effective September 10, 2026, 3-methoxytyramine (3-MT) testing will be available at APL as part of the plasma metanephrines test panel through the Calgary Analytical Toxicology lab.
- 3-MT is highly sensitive to dietary and pharmacological interferences and will be reported only upon request as an add-on to the plasma metanephrines order.

Background

- 3-MT is a dopamine metabolite. Testing for 3-MT serves as an adjunct to plasma metanephrine and normetanephrine in the evaluation of pheochromocytomas and paragangliomas (PPGLs), particularly for tumours secreting dopamine.
- Clinical guidelines recommend 24-hour urinary metanephrines or plasma-free metanephrines as the primary biochemical screening for PPGLs. However, certain PPGLs, especially extra-adrenal, head and neck paragangliomas and tumours linked to specific gene mutations, may selectively produce dopamine that leads to incomplete characterization by the standard metanephrines test. 3-MT improves the detection of these tumours.
- Plasma 3-MT may provide clinically useful prognostic information in risk stratification, surveillance, and monitoring for known PPGLs.
- Similar to plasma-free metanephrines, 3-MT is highly sensitive to interference from food, stress, or medications. Proper patient preparation is essential before testing. Due to its low circulating concentrations, testing for 3-MT requires highly sensitive techniques and will be performed using liquid chromatography-tandem mass spectrometry.

Action Required

- Ordering plasma 3-MT may be preferred to 3-MT in a 24-hour urine sample.
- Plasma 3-MT can be reported upon request as an add-on to the plasma metanephrines order.
 - To facilitate this request, please contact the Calgary Analytical Toxicology lab (403-770-3620, apl.dsctoxicologytechii@ahs.ca).
- Be aware that the reference interval for plasma 3-MT is: < 0.18 nmol/L.

Questions/Concerns

- Dr. Serguei Likhodi, Clinical Biochemist, Analytical Toxicology, South Sector | serguei.likhodi@aplabs.ca

Approved by

- Dr. Allison Venner, Clinical Biochemistry Section Chief, South Sector, APL
- Dr. Kate O'Connor, Medical Director, South Sector, APL