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Bile Acids

Test Use

Bile acids are produced in the liver, secreted into the biliary system and subsequently into the duodenum to aid in digestion of fats. They are then reabsorbed by the GI tract and removed from the portal circulation by the liver for subsequent re-use.

Bile acids will hence be affected by any process that affects any part of this recycling system. This may include biliary obstruction, reduced hepatic mass, loss of function with acute inflammatory or toxic insults, or when portal blood is shunted away from hepatocytes.

Bile acids can also occasionally be of value when differentiating between a pre-hepatic or haemolytic jaundice and other primary hepatic causes of jaundice.

NB: Bile acids may be unreliable in Maltese dogs and Maltese crosses, hence elevated bile acids may need to be further confirmed with an ammonia tolerance test.

Protocol

Animal preparation. The animal should be fasted for a minimum of 12 hours before sample collection.

- i) **Collect a resting sample into a plain or serum separator tube (1 mL minimum). Clearly label the tube with patient details and “Resting” or “0 hour” sample.**
- ii) **Feed a meal that contains sufficient fat content to stimulate gall bladder contraction. However, try to avoid over-feeding as this can cause excessive lipaemia in the post-prandial sample, which may interfere with the result. (i.e. 2 tablespoons maximum in larger animals)**
- iii) **Collect a further sample into a plain or serum separator tube (1 mL minimum), 2 hours after feeding. Clearly label the tube with patient details and “Post-prandial” or “2 hour” sample.**