

Reading a Blood Gas

Nursing

Four questions in order that turn a gas result into a named disturbance.

Take them in order. Do not skip ahead to the interpretation.

1

1 • Oxygenation

Look at the oxygen level and the oxygen the patient was on.

2

2 • pH

Below range is acidosis, above range is alkalosis, in range is neither.

3

3 • Carbon dioxide

Respiratory: it moves opposite to pH in a primary problem.

4

4 • Bicarbonate

Metabolic: it moves with pH in a primary metabolic problem.

5

5 • Compensation

The other system moves to correct; full correction returns pH.

Educational reference. Reference ranges differ between laboratories and with altitude. Interpretation belongs with the whole clinical picture.