

Herpes Simplex Virus Antibody



Does this test have other names?

HSV-1 antibodies, HSV-2 antibodies

What is this test?

The herpes simplex virus antibodies test is a blood test that screens for the herpes simplex virus (HSV). Culturing a sample from an active outbreak of HSV is the best method to diagnose a current infection. But the herpes simplex virus antibodies test can help identify the recurrence of a previous infection.

Why do I need this test?

You may need this test if you believe you may have herpes, but you don't have an active infection. For instance, if you have had sex with a partner who has herpes infection.

You may also have this test if you have HIV. Or are pregnant or hope to become pregnant. The herpes simplex virus antibodies test screens for current or previous HSV infections.

In some cases, the HSV antibodies test can be used to diagnose an active HSV infection. But more often, a herpes culture is used.

The antibodies test is valuable because many early herpes infections show no symptoms. If symptoms do happen, they can include soreness, as well as pain or burning at the site of the infection. This often happens before the outbreak of sores. You may also have headache, fever, body aches, or pain.

What other tests might I have along with this test?

If you have an active herpes infection, you may also need a physical exam so your healthcare provider can visually inspect the sores. Your provider may collect a sample from the sores to culture in a lab.

What do my test results mean?

Test results may vary depending on your age, gender, health history, and other things. Your test results may be different depending on the lab used. They may not mean you have a problem. Ask your healthcare provider what your test results mean for you.

If your test result is positive, it can mean that you have an active herpes infection without symptoms. It can also mean that you had an HSV infection in the past. The antibody blood test is not as reliable as culturing a sample from a herpes sore. But in a herpes infection without symptoms, it can be a useful method for finding out if you have an infection.

How is this test done?

The test is done with a blood sample. A needle is used to draw blood from a vein in your arm or hand.

Does this test pose any risks?

Having a blood test with a needle carries some risks. These include bleeding, infection, bruising, and feeling lightheaded. When the needle pricks your arm or hand, you may feel a slight sting or pain. Afterward, the site may be sore.

What might affect my test results?

An antibody test for HSV is not as reliable as culturing a sample from an active herpes outbreak because the results are not always easy to interpret. A positive test result can mean you have an active infection, or simply that you were exposed to the virus at some point in the past.

How do I get ready for this test?

You don't need to get ready for this test. Be sure your healthcare provider knows about all medicines, herbs, vitamins, and supplements you are taking. This includes medicines that don't need a prescription and any illegal drugs you may use.

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